

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

<https://archive.org/details/independentcatho00unse>

THE INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH
OF THE PHILIPPINES

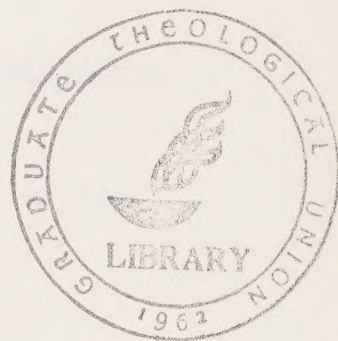
A Thesis

submitted in candidacy for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

in the
Berkeley Baptist Divinity School

by

Placido Palmejar



Department of
Missions

March 14, 1938
Berkeley, California

SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter One - General Historical Background

- I. Spanish Beginnings
- II. Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church
- III. Revolts of Filipinos against friar rule
- IV. Religious awakening among the masses
- V. Protestant America comes

Chapter Two - The Founding of the Aglipayan Church

- I. Gregorio Aglipay
- II. Organization of the Church
- III. Cleavage between the Aglipayan Church and the Roman Church
- IV. Membership

Chapter Three - Distinctive Features of the Aglipayan Movement

- I. View of Man, of the Universe, and of God
- II. The doctrine of the Incarnation
- III. Atonement and Redemption from Sin
- IV. Belief in the life to come
- V. Church polity

Chapter Four - The Aglipayan Church and Protestantism

- I. Attitude of the Aglipayans toward Protestantism
- II. Protestant attitude toward Aglipayanism

III. Extent of Cooperation between the two groups

IV. American Protestant missionaries and the Aglipayans

Chapter Five - The Church Today

I. Extent of its membership

II. Leadership

III. Weaknesses

IV. The outlook for the future

V. The church's significance for Filipino national
life tomorrow

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCE BOOKS

- Barrows, David P. History of the Philippines. New York. Houghton Mifflin Company. 1912
- Briggs, Charles W. The Progressing Philippines. Philadelphia. Griffith & Rowland Press. 1913
- Foreman, John The Philippine Islands. New York. Charles Scribner's Son. 1906
- Heiser, Victor, M.D. An American Doctor's Odessey. New York. W.W. Norton & Company 1936
- Laubach, Frank C. The People of the Philippines. New York. George H. Doran Company. 1924
- LeRoy, J.A. The Americans in the Philippines, Volumes I and II. New York. Houghton Mifflin Company. 1914
- Palmer, Albert W. Orientals in American Life. New York. Friendship Press. 1934
- Paterno, Pedro A. The Ancient Tagalog Civilization. Madrid. Imprenta Moderna. 1887
- Ryan, Archie L. Religious Education in the Philippines. Manila. Manila Printing Press. 1929
- Stuntz, Homer C. The Philippines and the Far East. New York. New York and Cincinnati Press. 1904
- Williams, B. R. The United States and the Philippines. New York. Doubleday, Page and Company 1929

OTHER SOURCES

- Catholic Historical Review, Volume IV, p. 327. Washington, D.C. Catholic Educational Press, 1915
- The New Catholic Dictionary. New York. The Universal Knowledge Foundation. 1929

OTHER SOURCES
(continued)

v

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume XII, pp. 15,16. New York.
Robert Appleton Company. 1911

PERIODICALS

The Baptist Missionary Magazine, Volume 79. Chicago, Illinois.
July, 1899. Article by F. de P. Castells

The Baptist Missionary Magazine, Volume 83. Boston, Massachusetts.
American Baptist Missionary Union. September, 1903. Article
by P.H.J. Lerrigo, M.D.

The Christian Century, 440 South Dearborn Street, Chicago,
Illinois. October 20, 1937. Article by Elmer K. Higdon

The Independent, New York, New York
October 29, 1903

The Open Court, Volume 22, The Open Court Publishing Company,
122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, Article by
R.T. House. October, 1908

The Open Court, Volume XXXVI(No. 5) The Open Publishing
Company. 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.
May, 1922. Article by George Ballard Bowers

The Standard, Volume 53. Chicago, Illinois. November 11,
1905. Article by A.A. Forshee

The International Review of Missions, Volume 18, No. 70.
Edinburgh House, Eaton Gate, Sloane Square, London, England.
S.W. 1; 419 Fourth Avenue, New York. April, 1929. Article
by Elmer K. Higdon

LETTERS

Coggins, Miss May. Baptist Missionary, Matron of Girls'
Dormitory of Macolod High School, Macolod, Occidental Negros, P.I.

Howard, Randolph L. Associate Secretary American Baptist
Foreign Mission Society. 152 Madison Avenue, New York

Munger, Reverend Henry W. Director of Evangelism of the
Philippine Baptist Convention. Fabrica, Occidental Negros, P.I.

Palmejar, Carlos E., A.B., M.A., Assistant Professor of English
The Philippine Women's University, Manila, Philippine Islands

Ryan, Archie L. First Methodist Church, Shawnee, Kansas. Former
President of Union Theological Seminary, Manila, Philippines
Shawnee, Kansas

INTERVIEWS

Fayloga, Amadeo

Student Pacific School of Religion,
Berkeley, California. Former
member of the Aglipayan Church in
the province of Ilocos Norte, P.I.

Robbins, Dr. Joseph C.

Foreign Secretary, American Baptist
Foreign Mission Society. 152 Madison
Avenue, New York, New York

INTRODUCTION

In preparing a brief sketch of the Filipino movement known as The Aglipayan Church, the main task is necessarily that of omission. Persons and facts of significance crowd upon one's attention. But as a selection is imperative, the writer has chosen to treat with relative fulness the initial and formative stages of the church and the work of its first leaders of pre-eminence. The first and second Chapters of this thesis are devoted primarily to the treatment of facts and events related to these various stages of church development. The third Chapter deals with the distinctive features of the Aglipayan Movement, placing emphasis on the religious, rationalistic, and scientific views held by its leaders, particularly Señor Isabelo de los Reyes, the real brains behind the movement, and Bishop Gregorio Aglipay its head. The fourth Chapter tells about the Aglipayan Church as it has come in contact with the Protestantism brought by American missionaries, about the attitudes of Aglipayans and Protestants toward each other, and of the extent of cooperation between them.

The fifth Chapter is a portrait of the church today, revealing the extent of its membership, leadership, points of strength and elements of weakness. It also discusses the outlook and significance of the church for the future of the Filipino nation.

The materials used by the writer are from books of history by different writers on the Philippines; missionary magazines and periodicals; letters from missionaries who are still in

the field on the Islands; and largely from the writer's first hand contact and knowledge of the Aglipayan Church and its history and life today. All that has been presented here is an attempt to reveal the truth about the Aglipayan Church in a Christian and intelligent way in the hope that such a presentation will create a deep missionary interest and concern on the part of Protestant Christians both in the Philippines and in the United States toward transforming the Church into a real spiritual body of Christ -- the Kingdom of God in miniature.

Christianity as the religion of Jesus is essentially a religion of "Go". It is a positive force that transforms and saves the whole of individual and social life here for that which is to come. It is this thought and belief which the writer holds that leads him to write this thesis. Jesus the Supreme Revealer of the loving, holy, and righteous God the Father must be revealed to the Philippines and the whole world by those who believe with all their heart and mind and strength in the Great Commission.

THE INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF THE PHILIPPINES

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A general survey of the background of Philippine history is important and essential in this study. Such a survey will help in understanding and appreciating the problems involved. Furthermore, this will give a clear and true picture of the situation and bring challenge to the reader of the great task of the Christian church.

1. Spanish Beginnings

The history of Spain in the Philippines began March 16, 1521, when Ferdinand Magellan, a great Portuguese navigator who sailed under the Spanish flag, discovered the Islands. That was twenty-nine years after Christopher Columbus discovered America. Magellan and his men landed on the small island of Homonhon south of Samar in the Visayan group. After a brief stay in Homonhon they sailed to Cebu where they were received by its king in a most friendly and hospitable way. In Cebu Magellan had a mass celebrated the first one to be held in the Islands. The natives were well pleased with the new religion which the newcomers brought to their island. They desired to be taught the Christian religion. A few priests who were with Magellan seized this opportunity and began their missionary work. After a brief period more than eight hundred natives were baptized in the Roman Catholic faith, including their king, Rajah Humabon. The queen was also baptized and was presented with a picture of the Child Jesus.

The kindness and hospitality of the people of Cebu won the admiration and gratitude of the discoverers. To show his gratitude Magellan offered his help to fight and destroy the enemies of Rajah Humabon who lived on another small island called Mactan. Three boatloads of Spaniards and twenty boatloads of Cebuans sailed to Mactan. There they were met by the warriors of the island who were brave and far superior in number. The Spaniards and the Cebuans were routed and many of them killed. Magellan himself was slain in this battle. Today a monument stands on the spot where this bravest and most fearless navigator of his time fell.

After Magellan's death the remainder of his men decided to return to Spain. Under the command of Sebastian del Cano, the ship Victoria sailed on a return voyage. After three years of sailing over uncharted seas the Victoria reached Spain as the first boat to circumnavigate the globe. This epoch-making voyage round the globe by Magellan's ship, had settled once and for all the question concerning the rotundity of the earth.

In 1522, a year after Del Cano returned to Spain, the Spanish King Charles V, decided to send an expedition to the East. Garcia Jofre de Loaisa, captain general of the fleet and governor of the Moluccas, was chosen as leader of the expeditionary force. On the twenty-fourth of July, 1525, after preparations were completed, he sailed with his party from Port Coruna in Spain, with the Philippines as the destination. De Loaisa took with him Sebastian del Cano who had been in command of the famous Victoria a year before, and a priest by the name of Andres de Urdaneta. In the latter part of 1526, the expeditionary party reached the coast of Mindanao. While they were trying to visit Cebu their fleet was

driven southward to the Moluccas. Shortly after the group arrived in Moluccas their commander De Loaisa died. Del Cano succeeded to the command of the fleet, but four days later he also died. The expedition failed and the Spanish fleet fell into the hands of the Portuguese.

Another expedition was sent to the Philippines in 1527, under the leadership of Alvaro de Saavedra. The purpose of this was not primarily to conquer and colonize the Islands but to find some of Magellan's men who were left in Cebu in 1521, and to find De Loaisa and his party who had failed to return. Saavedra reached the Moluccas but was soon captured by the Portuguese. Thus the second expedition, like the first, failed to accomplish its aim.

A third expedition under the command of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos was sent in 1542, with the purpose of discovering, conquering, and colonizing the islands and provinces of the southern sea toward the west. They started from Port Navidad in Mexico, November 1, 1542, and reached the eastern coast of Mindanao, in February, 1543. Villalobos did not succeed in establishing a settlement in the Islands for the natives were hostile. So that he gave up the attempt and sailed to the Moluccas where he was compelled to surrender to the Portuguese and shortly after he fell ill and died. The failure of this expedition delayed the conquest and colonization of the Philippines for nearly twenty-three years. One important fact that history records about Villalobos' efforts to honor his king and country was the naming of the Islands "Philippines" in honor of the Crown Prince Don Felipe, who became Philip II when his father Charles V abdicated the Spanish throne.

The wish of Philip II was to colonize and Christianized the Philippines. Thus in 1559 he commanded the viceroy of Mexico to prepare a fleet for the expedition. Five years had passed, however, before the boats were ready to sail. Finally, on the twenty-first of November 1564, the fleet left the port of Navidad in Mexico. It was commanded by Miguel Lopez de Legaspi. With him as second commander and chief navigator was Andres de Urdaneta, a soldier priest; these two able and brave men made possible the success of this expedition. Their fleet was composed of two large vessels and two small ones. In the entire crew there were three hundred and eighty persons; one hundred and fifty were sailors, two hundred were soldiers, twenty-four were officers, and six were priests.

The expeditionary party reached the island of Cebu February 13, 1565. Cebu was well populated, and Legaspi and his men found fifteen villages along the coast. However, the villagers were hostile toward the Spaniards and the latter took their island by assault, burning the houses of the inhabitants who fled to the mountains.

Legaspi and Urdaneta succeeded in founding the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines on the island of Cebu, calling the town San Miguel from Legaspi's first name. Later the name was changed to the "City of the Most Holy Name of Jesus", in honor of an image of the Child Jesus which one of the Spanish soldiers had found in one of the houses.

2. Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church

In 1565, the same year that the first Spanish town was established, the first Roman Catholic church was also founded. It was located at the center of the town of San Miguel, Cebu. The priests

who came with Legaspi and Urdaneta were opposed to the colonization of the Islands but were strongly in favor of establishing permanently the Roman Catholic faith. Thus they made Cebu the center of their mission field, later transferred to Manila, the capital of the archipelago. Manila was founded by Legaspi on June 3, 1571. Here he established a convent and a church for the Augustinian friars. One hundred and fifty wooden houses were built for the Spaniards who came with him, and he erected a magnificent building for the governor. The streets were laid out and the old native fort was reconstructed. Manila was so transformed that he called it the Distinguished and Ever Loyal City, and permanently made it the capital city and seat of the Philippine government.

As the first governor-general of the islands Legaspi labored hard and vigorously for their conquest, and was given great credit for their ultimate subjugation. Furthermore, he was responsible for the spread of Roman Catholicism, due to his loyalty to his king and to the pope. Worn out by his toil, he died on the twentieth of August, 1572, and was laid to rest in the soil of the land he had conquered. From that time till 1898 Spain kept possession and control of the Islands.

3. Revolts of Filipinos Against Friar Rule

It must be pointed out that the Filipinos made more than three hundred revolutions in the history of their country, against the unjust domination and immoral practices of both the ecclesiastical and the civil Spanish representatives in the Islands. The overmastering and guiding motive on the part of the Spanish friars was to satisfy their lust and greed for material gain. As David P. Barrows puts it, "The King wanted revenue for his treasury; the

1. Barrows, David P., History of the Philippines.
(old edition), p. 110

noble and the soldier, booty for their private purse; the friar, wealth for his order; the bishop, power for his church."¹ This, as every student of history and every intelligent person knows, was a clear policy of exploitation. Amidst the clash of these selfish interests, the Filipinos suffered. Whenever such conditions as these exist, it is a natural and logical thing for a people to rise in protest, or to rebel against the existing order and corrupt system.

The Church and State in the Philippines in Spanish times were so closely united together that it was easy for them to tyrannize and exploit the people. And with this union the Church lapsed into corruption. The spiritual and moral vitality and dynamic of religion died out, and the lives of its leaders became vicious. It was not the civil official who imposed upon the people and collected heavy taxes from them, but the friars. This was what happened: the Filipino priests and government subordinates were merely tools of the Spaniards to cut their own throats. They had no voice at all in matters pertaining to the religious, social, and economic welfare of the people. In fact, there was no such thing as "the welfare of the people" according to the general thinking and attitude of the Spanish leaders. No freedom of any kind was granted to the Filipinos. They were kept in utter ignorance as long as Spanish superiority and supremacy prevailed. But such a policy on the part of dominant or sovereign power could not continue long without being challenged by weak and oppressed humanity.

In 1872, in the little town of Sampaloc, province of Cavite, the people rose in revolt against the friars who maltreated women

and put men to work without pay. The Filipino priests in the same town were suspected of creating and arousing hatred against the Spaniards, especially the friars. Of course they had nothing to do with the uprising, although for years they had presented petitions to the friars asking for freedom in important religious matters that concerned the welfare of their parishes. Dr. Jose Burgos, a Filipino priest in the Cathedral in Manila made an especially strong plea for the dispossessed Filipino priests. Rev. Mariano Gomez, another Filipino priest, pleaded also for the freedom and welfare of the Filipino clergy. But the friars interpreted their actions as seditious. They were arrested, as also Father Jacinto Zamora, who was mistaken for another man who led the rebellion against the Spanish friars. The three innocent Filipino priests were tried and falsely convicted for sedition and rebellion. On the seventeenth of February, 1872, they were led to the execution field of Bagumbayan and there garroted. This execution of their own priests brought the Filipinos closer together in heart and soul against the whole group of Spanish clergy in the Philippines.

The Spirit of Protestantism in the form of the Aglipayan Movement grew and developed under these conditions. Its real aspect came with the Revolution of 1896-8 against Spain, when patriotism and religion made the Filipinos more determined of ending Spanish ecclesiastical rule by the use of collective military force. This Protestant spirit was further intensified and clarified with the declaration of independence and separation from Rome by the Filipino clergy in 1902. The general

population did not fight at first for political separation from Spain; the people and their own priests revolted against the cruelties and immoralities of the Spanish friars. They wanted equal representation in religious and civil matters. This the friars did not want to give, desiring rather to continue unchecked in their vicious and corrupt practices in order to satisfy their lust and greed for earthly gain. When the United States came to the Philippines in 1898, the Filipinos were in general control of their own country. They had captured from the hands of the Spaniards almost every part of the Islands except Manila which the American soldiers occupied under General Otis on the thirteenth of August, 1898.

4. Protestant America Comes

Spain's policy in ruling her colonies in other parts of the world was as selfish and unwise as in the Philippines. Cuba was under Spanish rule for years, and its people like those of the Philippines, had been oppressed by inhuman, selfish, and corrupt officials. The last of a series of uprisings broke out in Cuba in 1895; and in this war, which was fought with bitterness and cruelty on both sides, foreign investments especially those of the United States, suffered tremendous losses. Spanish authorities in Cuba were unable to prevent many abuses that were wrought against the interests of friendly foreign nations. The United States government and people tried for some time to be patient toward Spain. However, the tension was reached and the strain broken when on the fifteenth of February, 1898, the battleship Maine was blown up in the

harbor of Havana. Responsibility for this act was not exactly determined, but it shocked the American nation, and popular animosity against Spain soared high. Furthermore, the free and democratic people of the United States Republic had their sympathy with the struggling Cubans. The Congress of the United States, on the twentieth of April, 1898, declared by joint resolution "that the people of Cuba are, and of right ought to be free and independent." Also, Congress demanded that Spain withdraw her sovereignty over the island. To this demand Spain refused, and the two countries went to war against each other.

It is the law of war that whatever possession, territory, or property may belong to one party in the contest should be seized and confiscated or held by the other until a decision is reached as to what should be done with them at the conclusion of that war. Since the Philippine Islands were a possession of Spain, they became the object of United States military operations.

On April twenty-fifth, or five days after the Congress and people of the United States declared war against Spain, Commodor George Dewey at Hongkong received the orders, "Proceed to the Philippine Islands; commence operations at once against Spanish fleet; capture vessels or destroy." On the night of April thirtieth, Dewey with nine battleships entered Manila harbor.

The following morning, on the first day of May, 1898, Dewey bombarded the enemy fleet and in four hours finished the task of destruction. He waited for further orders from the State

Department, and his fleet remained in the harbor of Manila until the arrival of eighty-five hundred American soldiers late in July of the same year. Then on August 13, 1898, after a little resistance by the Spanish soldiers (to save their face) they gave up the city of Manila to General Otis and his men. Fifteen thousand Filipino soldiers under General Aguinaldo took part in the capture of Manila, but were not allowed by American soldiers to enter the city. This act later brought suspicion on the part of Filipinos against American forces, which resulted shortly after in the unnecessary clash between the United States and the Filipinos.

With the defeat of the Spaniards and the capitulation of the capital of the Islands, and with the treaty of peace at Paris on December 30, 1898, which concluded the war between the United States and Spain, the flag of Castile which had proudly floated over the Islands for almost four centuries, was taken down. The Stars and Stripes were unfurled in its place, signifying that Spanish tyrannical rule over the Philippines was forever ended.

Protestant America came and stayed "to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and to prepare them for self-government." For thirty-seven years America has helped the Filipinos along the path of progress and of peace. Great blessings have been enjoyed by the people which otherwise could not have come to them without the providential coming of the great and Christian republic of the West. Protestant Christianity which had for years been the champion of religious liberty in America, was introduced into the Philippines

in the time when the religious crisis which led to the founding of the Aglipayan Church was at its peak. And this, more than any other factor, had given the people a message of hope and an evangelical faith which the Roman church was unable to provide.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUNDING OF THE AGLIPAYAN CHURCH

It was about the middle of 1902 when the great schism in the Roman Catholic church in the Philippines took place. This separatist movement led to the development of the Filipino Independent Church. It was similar to those in other lands and times which come after defeated and suppressed tyranny. A number of prominent persons formed the nucleus of the Separatist group, but foremost among them was Father Gregorio Aglipay, an excommunicated Filipino priest. He, together with Don Isabelo de los Reyes and others, were from the outset strong supporters of the Independence movement for both State and Church in the Islands. The Aglipayan movement was coeval with the political upheaval which culminated in the Revolution of 1896-1898.

1. Gregorio Aglipay

Gregorio Aglipay y Labayen was born on the ninth of May, 1860, at Batac, one of the principal towns in the province of Ilocos Norte. One of the great incidents in the story of his life which he could always remember, was when he and his father were thrown into a dark prison by their Spanish oppressors. The reason for their imprisonment was their failure to set out the number of tobacco plants demanded by the government tobacco monopoly. The Spanish governor, Basco, who was in charge of this type of business had made a strict rule that any Filipino who could not produce a required amount that the government needed would be put into prison and his property confiscated by the civil authorities. The Aglipays were unable to plant tobacco that year because of the long

dry season that would not permit any kind of plants to grow. Thus they suffered for this circumstance which they were unable to control.

Aglipay was about sixteen years when this unforgettable experience came upon him. Probably it served as a great inspiration to his later efforts to resist injustice, tyranny and wrong during the crucial hour of his country's history. Soon after he obtained his freedom from the dark and unsanitary dungeon, when he had been kept long enough to satisfy the whims and caprices of the Spanish officials, he left his home town of Batac and went to Manila to study. There he entered the College of San Juan de Letran where he largely worked his way through. This institution was under the direct supervision and management of the friars of the Dominican Order. After four years at college he was graduated from the course in Arts and Science, and then went to the Recollect Theological Seminary in Vigan, province of Ilocos Sur, to study for the priesthood.

In 1889 Aglipay went to Manila for ordination as priest. As a student he had been conscientious and alert and was highly regarded by the Spanish friars. He was the classmate of General Artemio Ricarte whom the American civil authorities in the Island, in 1902, ordered out of the country because he would not give allegiance to the United States nor salute the American flag. Like Ricarte, Aglipay was uncompromising in his revolutionary principles. While Andres Bonifacio, founder of the Katipunan(a revolutionary society),

and other national figures such as General Emilio Aguinaldo,¹⁴ General Antonio Luna, Juan Luna, and their compatriots were busy at work for political freedom of the country, he conceived the idea of declaring the independence of the Filipino clergy.

In June 12, 1898, the independence of the archipelago from Spain was proclaimed by the Revolutionary Congress which met in Malolos, capital of the province of Bulacan, a temporary seat of the Filipino National Government. Aglipay was sent by his native province of Ilocos Norte as representative in this Revolutionary Congress. In the uprising of 1896, he had not taken any part; but after General Aguinaldo signed the pact of the Katipunan at Biac-na-bato, he was sent to one of the insurgents' camps, and there was induced by an insurgent leader named Makabulos, to sign the pact. Aglipay did sign that pact having as part of its provisions the following:

"He who desires to become a brother will be asked the following questions:

1. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will never do injury to the Philippines?
2. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will help the Filipinos in their aspirations?
3. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will always esteem our brothers of the Katipunan?
4. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will be able to assassinate your parents, brothers, wife, sons, daughters, relatives, friends, fellow townsmen, or Katipunan brothers should they forsake or betray our cause?
5. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will shed your last drop of blood in defense of our mother country?
6. Do you swear before our Lord Jesus that you will sacrifice your life and goods, when there is the slightest possibility of our brothers being in need?

1. Le Roy, J.A., Americans in the Philippines., p. 287

"For all this, that we, your brothers in the Katipunan, may have the evidence of all you have sworn, you will allow us to extract a drop of your blood with which to write your name, so that we, your brothers of the Katipunan may know that you will never betray our cause."

Date _____

Signed _____ "

Aglipay was too liberal for the friars of Tarlac province where he had been priest, and narrowly escaped arrest by fleeing to Manila. In the capital city he was given refuge by the Canon of the Cathedral. He was in Manila when Admiral Dewey's fleet arrived from Hongkong in 1898, to destroy the Spanish vessels anchored in Manila Bay. Sixteen days after the sinking of Cervera's battleships by the Americans Father Aglipay was sent by Archbishop Nozaleda to the rebel camp to win them over to Spain. This responsible mission which the archbishop had entrusted to Aglipay placed the latter to a position of strategic importance. And it must be remembered that Archbishop Nozaleda was excommunicated by Aglipay shortly afterwards, because he misrepresented to the Holy See in Rome the actual conditions in the Philippines and permitted the Spanish priests there to commit every possible sin and crime against the Filipinos.

More than ten thousand American soldiers had come to the Islands after Dewey's victory, and General Aguinaldo who believed Aglipay had understood the Americans better than he did, tried to win him to the insurgent side. Aglipay now became the object of both friar and rebel friendship. Each side tried hard to win him and get his support. And while they were opposed in a bitter way toward each other, he remained friendly to them both. The friars recognized Aglipay's service for them in

1. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 129

2. The Independent, October 29, 1903

saving many of them from torture and possible death from the hands of the insurgents who had vowed to kill every friar and make the Islands free from their hideous and sinful acts.

Bishop Hevia, it was said, would have been burned alive instead of being put to prison, had Father Aglipay not interfered. As a reward for this act Bishop Hevia made him ecclesiastical governor of his diocese. This elevated the Filipino priest to a position equal to that of a bishop. As Frank C. Laubach suggests, "One should not forget this, as it has an important bearing on the future career of Aglipay."¹

Archbishop Nozaleda, in 1898, received Aglipay with friendly courtesy and admiration in Manila, and told him that the Islands were soon to become a republic. Then when this objective had been achieved he would be made a link to connect the Philippines with the Vatican at Rome. From that time on, with such promises and prophecies as these, he faced the future with high hopes. Writing in The Independent, official organ of the Independent Filipino Catholic Church, October 29, 1903, Father Aglipay made the following statement calling to mind Archbishop Nozaleda's words to him seven years before:

"He gave me further directions to organize the province of Bulacan, Pampanga, and Pangasian He approved the transfer of the episcopate by Bishop Hevia to me, and I returned cheerfully to the great task assigned me."²

This showed that the friars had succeeded in winning him over to them temporarily, by means of alluring promises such as the one just mentioned. However, while they were playing a seemingly successful trick on Aglipay, the insurgents were also busy

1. Fernandez, Hernando, Brief History of the Philippines

working to get his support of the patriotic cause. The brain of the Philippine Revolution, Apolinario Mabini, an invalid but a brilliant young lawyer from the province of Batangas, beat the friars at their game by suggesting to the Revolutionary leaders that Father Aglipay be appointed "First Military Chaplain of the Insurgent Army." The Revolutionary Congress acted promptly upon this wise suggestion and he was made military chaplain. Then his promotion came in October 8, 1898, when the Revolutionary government at Malolos appointed him the Vicar-General of the Philippine Islands.

Let it be stated here that at Biac-na-bato (broken stone cave) in the rugged mountain fastness of Bulacan, members of the Katipunan had made their demands to Spain, which were as follows:

- "1. The expulsion of the religious orders.
2. Philippine representation in the Spanish Cortes.
3. The equal treatment of Filipinos and Spaniards in the application of justice.
4. The employment of Filipinos in the high posts of the government service.
5. The liberty of the press, and the right to form associations.
6. The payment by the Spanish government of the sum of three million pesos (one and one half million dollars), as an indemnity to those who had lost their property during the war, to widows and orphans, and to the leaders of the rebellion who were to live in exile. This sum was finally reduced to eight hundred thousand pesos."

Spanish representatives in the Islands accepted these demands merely in words, although they had already paid half of the amount of money which they promised to pay to the insurgents.

The bearing and significance of these demands upon future development of events which were already beginning to take

place on a vast scale, indicate that the Islanders wanted first and above all the expulsion of the friars, whom they considered to be the authors of all the tyranny, oppressions, injustices and miseries suffered by the whole people. The appointment of Father Aglipay to the position of Vicar-General of the archipelago was a move toward the fulfilment of their age-long dream of freedom from friar rule, since the religious and secular life of the Filipinos had been under the whims and caprices of the dominant Spanish priests for more than three centuries past.

The friars had abandoned their efforts to secure further aid from Father Aglipay, and turned to the Americans for favor and protection of their lives and interests. In the war with the United States Spain had been defeated and at the close of that war the Treaty of Paris had been signed by the envoys of the two countries transferring from the rule of Spain to the United States. But friar rule and influence remained. Archbishop Chapelle of New Orleans, who was present in Paris at the peace negotiations which ended the Spanish-American War, had obtained concessions for the friars in the Islands. These concessions were defined and included in the Treaty of Paris.

The hope of the Filipino clergy and of the whole country seemed to be fading fast, and they thought that America had fostered and protected friar interest and meant to keep the Spanish priests in the Islands as their allies against Filipinos. The clever Archbishop Nozaleda seized the opportunity

1. Robertson, James A., Catholic Historical Review, 4:326
2. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines, p. 131

at what seemed the right psychological moment, by calling an ecclesiastical tribunal which pronounced major excommunication sentence on Father Aglipay. This was done on the 29th of April, 1899, with the charges that the Filipino priest employed the title of Military Chaplain of the Revolutionary Army; that he usurped plenary powers and exercised them over the Filipino clergy; that he appointed a temporary vicar-general for the diocese during the absence of the bishop; that he distributed two circulars advising the Filipino clergy no longer to recognize the Spanish prelates. Aglipay was accordingly found guilty of usurpation of power.¹ Thus, according to Frank C. Laubach, "The irrepressible Filipino priest, with a bravado worthy of Martin Luther, immediately appealed to the Pope, and actually excommunicated Nozaleda, Archbishop of the Philippine Islands." ² Aglipay's accusations were that the Archbishop had misrepresented the truth concerning actual conditions in the Islands; that he had condoned the sins and crimes which the friars had committed against the Filipinos.

Archbishop Chapelle of New Orleans, who has already been mentioned as the one present when the Treaty of Paris was signed by the United States and Spain, was sent as papal delegate to investigate and smooth out the controversy between the Filipino clergy and the friars, but particularly between Father Aglipay and Archbishop Nozaleda. Upon his arrival in Manila on the second of January, 1900, he gave the impression to the Filipinos that he representing both the Vatican and govern-

1. Le Roy, J.A., The Americans in the Philippines, Vol.,II,
p. 298

2. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines, p. 131

ment at Washington. His self-conceit and boastful attitude made the matter worse. The Filipinos now had come to the conclusion that the Americans were supporting the friars and would make their position secure in the Islands. A reporter and agent of the friars made a false report after his interview with the American archbishop, giving the following statement as that by the Archbishop:

"The four public lectures given by Father McKinnon caused President Mc Kinley to realize the necessity for the monastic orders remaining in the Philippines. I come to Manila with ample authority for everything. The friars of the Philippines have alarmed themselves without reason. I know their importance and am openly predisposed in their favor. If the friars occupy the parishes they will be considered as elements of order and therefore as American agents."¹

Both the clergy and people of the Islands believed at the time these false reports. They only drove the Filipinos to great fury, for they were determined never to let the friars regain their ancient ground.

"An undercurrent of suspicion that the friars might regain their old control under the protection of the United States was all the while the chief reason for keeping the Filipino radicals in revolution during 1899, 1900, and 1901."²

It was during the latter part of this revolution that Father Aglipay took a very active and prominent part. The insurgents were fighting a losing fight against the well-equipped and superior force of the United States. He was one of the few men who could inspire, encourage and command the rapidly weakening forces. He called the whole Ilocano population to rise against the enemies. Religion and patriotism were mingled together in the hearts and minds of the people. It was said that he wielded the mysterious power of the priesthood with

1. The Independent, October, 1903

amazing effectiveness in the Ilocano region of Northern Luzon. Father Aglipay at the head of half-armed patriots inflicted considerable losses on the American soldiers. He fought even after General Aguinaldo surrendered to the United States Army. But when he realized that resistance was no longer heroism but madness, when he saw the last ray of the light of hope vanish, he peacefully laid down his arms and surrendered. Later he wrote the story of his surrender to the American forces in The Independent, October, 1903:

"I voluntarily came to Laoag and surrendered to Colonel Mc Gaskey of the twentieth infantry, the commanding officer, and took the oath of allegiance to the United States and have kept it."¹

Aglipay's faith in the intentions and purposes of the United States in the Philippines was fortified by the message of the Federal Party, largest political party in the Islands, giving assurance to the Filipino people that the Constitution of the United States required utter neutrality in religious matters, and calling upon the natives to disband and surrender, hopeful that they would be given justice in regard to the cause they had been fighting for. This practically ended the unnecessary war that had been fought which had been due to misunderstanding between the Philippines and the United States.

2. Organization of the Church

On account of the continuance of the friars as parish curates, Father Aglipay at the close of the war against the United States, planned to establish the Filipino Independent Catholic Church, commonly called the Aglipayano Church. It has been

1. The Open Court, Vol. XXII, p. 615

2. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 138

mentioned in the preceding pages that Father Aglipay had been appointed Vicar-General of the Philippines by General Aguinaldo. He did not seem to be enthusiastic about his new post as vicar-general, but in 1901 Don Isabelo de los Reyes, a well-educated and voluminous writer, returned from Spain and made known his conviction gained from a study of conditions in Spain and the Philippines, that "The Philippine Church could no longer thrive as a part of the European body."¹ Immediately he formed a new organization, with the membership mostly coming from the laboring class. He also invited the Filipino priests to attend the meeting. It was in fact a labor union he had formed in which he planned to try out some socialistic theories he learned while in Europe. On August 3rd, 1903, the labor group proclaimed a schism with the Vatican and unanimously selected Father Aglipay as chief bishop. Aglipay disapproved the idea of separation from Rome and on the 20th of August published a manifesto refusing to identify himself with the Separatists and the Independent Church Movement. However, this was only an outward sign of his loyalty to the Holy See at Rome. He wanted to be cautious and sure of the steps he had to take. As Laubach puts it, "He was too practical to be stampeded into this new organization until he felt reasonable assurance of its success."²

The American missionaries who were already in the Islands when the open breach in the Roman Catholic Church took place assumed the important and difficult task of requesting an interview with Father Aglipay which brought him and Don Isabelo de los Reyes face to face with each other. The two prominent men

met in Manila in August, 1902, at the headquarters of the American Bible Society, which was then within the Walled City. De los Reyes was a socialist while Aglipay was a Catholic priest and an insurgent general. A number of Protestant missionaries were with them, while the American government watched them with suspicion for they were both anti-American. The missionaries proposed a plan of rending the Roman Church in the Islands into two parts. Father Aglipay exploded and described the situation vividly and earnestly as he saw it. He boldly portrayed the bitter contempt and hatred of the friars who treated the Filipino priests as underdogs and the people as an inferior race. He put all the blame for the general unrest on the friars. Then he told the American missionaries of his plan to lead in the establishment of an independent Catholic Church wholly under Filipino control. He invited the missionaries to join with him.

Aglipay's program had for its first part the complete separation from the papacy and absolute autonomy in the Islands. The second part of his program was a declaration for a stand for purity of Catholic doctrine. The American missionaries in response to his invitation to join in a movement against the papacy and have a united Protestant front, told him that they could not ally themselves with any cause that did not take the Holy Scripture as the rule and guide in doctrine and life. Furthermore, the missionaries urged him to study the real situation conscientiously and bend his energies to the true cause of Protestantism. He was

1. Willis, Our Philippine Problem, p. 199

given a warning that if he could not follow the suggestions by these friendly American missionaries, he would surely meet failure in his efforts to forward his program. He was asked to consider seriously the question of the supremacy of the Scripture; to accept the idea that marriage should be introduced among the clergy; and to abandon the belief and practice of mariolatry.

For a few months Aglipay remained undecided, while waiting for a word from Rome concerning his pardon by the pope and the consideration of his request that Filipinos be made bishops. When he realized that his hope was in vain, he changed his mind by joining with Don Isabelo de los Reyes the real brains behind the Filipino Independent Church movement.

The friars were still in the Islands and their presence caused continued unrest. Their land holdings were vast and these presented a great problem to the American Government. Civil Governor William H. Taft was therefore sent to Rome by President Theodore Roosevelt to talk with the Pope in regard to the friar problem. This was in 1902. Negotiations followed and the friar estates were bought by the United States government for \$7,239,784.66. There were 167,127 hectores of these friar lands, the best agricultural land in the Philippines.¹

Governor Taft returned to the Islands and announced that he failed to get any arrangement for the immediate withdrawal of the Spanish friars from the Philippines. The news reached

1. Stuntz, Homer C., The Philippines and the Far East.,
p. 490

Aglipay and he broke decisively with the Pope, October 17, 1902, and signed the "third epistle" of the Aglipayan Church. Nine days after these momentous events in Roman Catholic church history in the Islands, Father Aglipay celebrated his first mass as Obispo Maximo of the Filipino Independent Catholic Church. The mass was said in the open air not far from a big Roman Catholic church in Tondo district and was attended by thousands of jubilant and enthusiastic people. As Reverend Homer C. Stuntz of the Methodist Episcopal mission observed, "The sensation producted was tremendous."¹

Shortly after this Aglipay appointed several Filipino priests as bishops, and also appointed and assigned priests to vacant places throughout the archipelago which had been left by the friars. in Luzon. It did not mean for its leaders satisfaction and ease; rather it meant a signal beginning of a forward movement of Aglipayanism which had for its aim the winning of the country's whole population to its cause. Major George Ballard Bowers of the Philippine Constabulary, after an interview with Aglipay, wrote an article entitled, "Animism, Aglipay's Cult, and Christianity's Eclipse in the Philippines" which The Open Court, a monthly magazine devoted to the science of religion, the religion of science, and the extension of the religious parliament idea, published on May, 1922. Bowers in his statement concerning Aglipay's efforts in organizing his church, said:

"He made a whirlwind campaign through the archipelago, appointing priests in every village. For a time it appeared that the Roman Catholic church was doomed to disappear both physically and spiritually...Aglipay

1. Ballard, Major G.B., in The Open Court, May, 1932

appointed priests from every station in life to be assigned to the vacant parishes after three months training. Two appointed had been soldiers of my command. One a private was such a worthless individual that I refused to re-enlist him. I always refused him a recommendation, fearing he might use it to re-enter the service in another province. One day he informed me that Aglipay had promised him an appointment if he could bring a recommendation from me. After I had seen Aglipay's contingent at the dance, I did not have the heart to refuse my simple soldier. He was duly appointed and assigned near my station where I had a detachment of his former comrades. It is needless to add that I regretted my recommendation. He had led my soldiers into so much mischief that I was compelled to remove them to a station farther in the interior. The priest never lost his respect for me, always saluting me in a military manner. The second priest had been a corporal, a married man, made parish priest of the village in which lived the parents of his wife."¹

The above quotation reveals the type of materials that Aglipay used in organizing the Filipino Independent Catholic Church, even at the period of its first growth and development. Aglipay may have been honest and sincere in his efforts to establish his church, but any person could say that he was sadly lacking in spiritual insight and moral discernment, in the light of historical observation. Aglipay's appointment and assignment of soldiers to take the office of "priest" is a revelation of the man's nationalistic and patriotic interest and the lack of religious and moral consciousness on his part.

The Aglipayan church had been organized in Luzon island, particularly in the Ilocos provinces, representing the language group to which Aglipay belonged. From the Ilocos provinces the movement spread to central and southern Luzon, then to the Visayan islands, and to northern Mindanao in the South. In the Visayan islands strongholds of the Aglipayan

church were to be found in Negros-Cebu, and Iloilo. The reason why the people in these places accepted Aglipayanism with open arms was the fact that during the general and final revolt against Spain, but especially against the friars, in 1896-8, they were people who were aggressive and persistent in their struggle for political and religious liberty.

It has been mentioned early in this chapter that the Filipino Independent Catholic church was Roman in all of its outward appearances. Also, a great many of its practices were still Roman, for its leaders knew of no other way. In this connection let it be stated here that it just followed the customs and ways of the Roman church in matters regarding the form and conduct of its services. Its priests, bishops and archbishop were garbed in the same manner as the Roman Church dignitaries were, as to their ecclesiastical garments. In its organized form the Aglipayan church was controlled by the head bishop in the person of Aglipay; by his subordinate bishops, about thirty in number; and by priests, about four hundred, who were scattered over the Philippine archipelago.

3. Cleavage Between the Filipino Independent Church and the Roman Church.

In the discussion of this subject, questions such as these may arise:

"Where does the gulf between the Aglipayan church and the Roman Catholic church lie? How could any person tell the difference between the two churches if he happens to be inside

of one or the other? Is it just the outward characteristics or the inward features that differentiate these two religious bodies from each other? " etc.

After the Aglipayan church had been organized in 1902, it repudiated the claim of the pope in Rome as vicar of Christ here on the earth and therefore as the supreme head of the "Church Universal" known as the Roman Catholic church. It broke away from the Roman tradition of celibacy of the clergy by allowing its own priests to marry, a practice which the latter had been opposing very strongly ever since its history began. The Aglipayan church did not take, had not taken any instructions from Rome after it had been founded and organized. The Filipino Independent Catholic church had Father Aglipay as its head and to him all its followers looked for guidance and teachings concerning their souls' salvation.

In the Roman church one may be able to find scores of images of the saints they adore; whereas in the Aglipayan such idolatrous practices of worship were not known and therefore the Aglipayans did not have any images of saints inside their churches. However, the real cleavage lay in the different views that each of these churches held. The Aglipayan church had a scientific, enunciated, formulated, and modernistic form of ideas and beliefs which De los Reyes, one of its foremost leaders had, whereas the Roman church had a fixed, ancient, and traditional form of beliefs. Also, another outstanding cleavage between the two was that the mass

was said in the Roman church in Latin, but in the Aglipayan church it was said in the Filipinos' own tongues so that they could understand. Further discussion along these same lines will be found in the third chapter of this thesis under the title, "Distinctive Features of the Aglipayan Movement." In it the reader may be able to see more vividly the picture of the Filipino Independent church and to understand better and clearer the gulf that lies between this new church and the Roman church.

4. Membership

The membership of the Aglipayan church was first composed of extremely nationalistic and patriotic men like Don Isabelo de los Reyes, Don Felipe Buencamino, Father Gregorio Aglipay and a few others whose names were not included in the list. There were a great many Filipino priests besides Aglipay who had been longing fervently for ecclesiastical freedom just as their parishioners had been struggling enthusiastically for political independence. As has been stated before, Governor Taft who went to Rome to confer with the pope and ask for the immediate withdrawal of the Spanish friars from the Islands, had failed in his mission. Already Aglipay had been leading the movement of separation of the Filipino clergy from Rome, and upon his appeal to other Filipino priests the latter responded, especially those who were disappointed at Taft's failure to effect the immediate eviction of the friars, whom they considered as 'thorns in the flesh.' They called on their parishioners to follow their example. By the thousands

1. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 144

2. American Catholic Review, 1905, p. 685

people from the Ilocos provinces who spoke Aglipay's dialect had joined the Aglipayan movement. Most of them were village dwellers, people who had been oppressed by the Spanish friars in number of ways. In Manila and the surrounding towns and cities of the Tagalogs, De los Reyes urged people from all walks of life, especially the laboring class, to join the Aglipayan movement and form the Filipino Independent Church. Likewise, thousands of Tagalogs joined the new church. Day by day and month by month, in a few years that followed 1902, the membership in the Aglipayan Church grew and expanded, down through the Visayan islands and into the island of Mindanao in the south.

Concerning this influx of members into the Aglipayan church, Frank C. Laubach writes:

"In 1903 Aglipay claimed three million adherents and by 1905 he claimed four millions. Fully two hundred Filipino priests had gone over, many of them literally stampeded into the new church by their congregations. The Aglipayans declared that out of the six or seven millions of Filipino Romanists it would be difficult to find one million loyal members remaining."¹

A Dominican friar, Ambrose Coleman, who visited the Philippines in 1903, wrote the following statement after his return to Ireland:

"Freedom, if given at present to the revolutionary party would mean...the destruction of the Catholic religion in the Philippine Archipelago."²

This showed how an outsider or a visitor from the West had been impressed with the extent and strength of membership of the Aglipayan movement during its early days.

But with the coming years the number of its members declined.

This was due to the fact that Aglipay and his followers, or the Aglipayan church as a whole, had not much to give them more than what the Roman church could give. Their spiritual longings and hunger remained unfulfilled and unsatisfied and many of them returned to the old church.

CHAPTER III

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE AGLIPAYAN MOVEMENT

Every historical movement for human liberty and progress, irrespective of the time and place of its appearance and regardless of the conditions, circumstances, and forces that have brought it into being, have always had its own peculiar and distinct characteristics. Such a case may be applied to the Aglipayan Movement, launched thirty years ago by the young Filipino priest whose name we already have mentioned in the previous chapter.

The Aglipayan movement may be differentiated from other movements such as the Protestant Reformation in Europe with Martin Luther as its leading figure, the Wesleyan Movement in England with the Wesley brothers, and a number of others which appeared at earlier or later dates, in that it was a religious-political struggle of a people in the Orient whose temper, philosophy, attitudes, and idiosyncrasies were far different from those of the West. Although this Movement was pre-eminently religious, its dominant spirit and character was nationalistic. Perhaps this was due very largely to the fact that the Church and the State, being closely united together, had every advantage and occasion to muster their forces in exploiting and oppressing those under their control. The Spanish friars who were influential and more powerful than the government representatives of Spain in the Philippines, held all phases of life of the Filipinos under the sway of their power and influence. In the guise of religion they did whatever they wanted to do with their victims. Thus for more than three centuries the Filipinos have been slaves to

1. The Standard, Vol.53, November 11, 1905

traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. They did not have any chance whatsoever to think for themselves or to express their own beliefs and convictions upon the basis of truth in the realm of religion and life. The revolt of the people along these lines took the form of the Filipino Independent Catholic Church and this chapter will deal with its distinctive beliefs, ideas, doctrines, and views.

1. View of Man and his Universe.

After the Aglipayans had shaken off the traditions of the Romish church, they became aware of the need for a basis for their faith, in a number of things that pertain to life and the universe in which they live. Thus they began casting about for a belief. As Reverend A.A. Forshee, one of the earliest Baptist missionaries to the Philippines, writes in The Standard,

"Here we have the spectacle of a church (the Aglipayan) hunting for a creed, which is not so bad after all. Much better have a church on the hunt for truth than to imagine that they have all that there is to be had, and to rest satisfied, doing nothing."¹

The "hunt for truth" was undertaken by Sr. Isabelo de los Reyes, a great Filipino scholar and an agitator who studied and resided in Europe for a considerable length of time. He was recognized by Filipinos not only in the rank and file of the Aglipayan Movement but also by those outside as the real brains of the movement. The daring and lonely search for truth by De los Reyes must excite both pity and admiration in any person of culture and of fairness in intellect. Making

1. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 153

2. Paterno, Pedro A., Ancient Tagalog Civilization,
p. 56

mention of De los Reyes on this point, Frank C. Laubach has been led to express his feeling that,

"One wishes that a mind as able as his had been equipped with a better theological knowledge and that he had enjoyed access to books in some languages other than Spanish. De los Reyes, upon a totally inadequate foundation, set about to construct a religion for his nation."¹

In the first pamphlet that he wrote, entitled "La Religion Katipunan" (The Religion of the Society of the Sons of the People), De los Reyes in strong language advised the Filipinos to go back to the primitive religion they had before Spain came to the Islands. His thesis was that all religions were good at bottom. He had the idea that the existence of many religions in the world was a convincing proof that God desired a religion native to the Filipino people. The worship of Bathala² seemed to De los Reyes very similar to the worship of God by Christian people. He made some suggestions that the Aglipayans adapt the worship of Bathala, but when he found out that the temper of other leaders in the Independent Church was absolutely opposed to such a drastic move, he gave up the idea altogether. By temperament De los Reyes is progressive and modernistic in his views. The idea of going back to the old time religion of his people did not mean to him returning to the ancient period; there was full freedom from past associations in regard to the idea of Bathala, and it appeared to him as a vehicle for Filipino progress.

For the benefit of the reader and to explain why De los Reyes advised the Filipinos to return to their religion of

pre-Spanish times, let us learn what Bathala means. Pedro A. Paterno, one of the prominent figures in Philippine history, describes in his book called "The Ancient Tagalog Civilization," published in 1887, the conception and meaning of the word "Bathala". In the Tagalog dialect the word used for God was Bathala. While the Jews held the name of Jehovah in reverence, the Tagalogs did the same thing in regard to Bathala. He was the unnamable God whom they never mentioned save in prostrating themselves. They had no other god but Bathala. This is Paterno's assertion, which leads us to believe that the ancient Tagalogs were monotheists.

With the untrammelled imagination of a poet, Paterno writes:

"Bathala is the substance, all action and passion, eternally generating one, one generating two, two generating three, three generating all the universe. All things exist in single simplicity, and there is unity in the multiplicity of all things. Nothing exists outside of it. As the rain, emanation of the sea, rises and returns to the sea, divine emanations are born and return to the infinite substance, where they go to be destroyed as drops of dew in the immensity of the ocean.

"For the good, Bathala is the sun which irradiates good, the flower which forms beauty, the songster which produces harmony. For the evil (to whom Bathala gives existence, as to the stones, -life, as to the beasts; - intelligente, as to man), Bathala is the destructive tempest, the devouring flame, the cataclysm with death. Principle of all law, of all order, of all beauty, he absorbs in his breast all spirit, but repels far from himself all evil.

"Man lives and thinks. Nothing is more perfect on the earth which he treads. Yet man is an atom in space, an instant in time, his body a grain of dust, his life a sleep, his spirit a spark which reels in the glory of the sun. High above the beautiful sun is heaven,

1. Paterno, Pedro A., Ancient Tagalog Civilization,
p. 56

2. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 44

3. Paterno, Pedro A., Ancient Tagalog Civilization,
p. 56

an eternal habitation. The just enter it through the rainbow; here they are reunited with the anito. (considered by the Tagalog to be in the class of saints in the Roman Catholic Church. Here they are lost in the immensity of Bathala."1

Frank C. Lauchach who had made a study of the religions of the Filipinos writes the following comment on the word "anito":

"Unless one wishes to call the anito or departed spirits gods. The Tagalogs themselves considered the anito to be in the class of saints in the Roman Catholic church."2

"Anito is the man who prays and offers sacrifices to the eternal, at last he shall see him. Anito is he who honors his father and venerates his mother, and loves them devotedly; he shall live for ages. Anito is he who guards and honors the dead body of the departed and follows the precepts of the monos (genii who inhabit the baliti tree), he shall be immortal.

"The commands of the monos are five in number: Kill no living being, do not rob, do not commit adultery, do not lie, and drink no intoxicating liquor."3

The Tagalogs and other tribes were formerly from southern Asia and no doubt they had been in contact with Indian cultures and religion centuries, later after they had permanently settled in the Philippine, they carried on their commercial and cultural relations with India, Java, Sumatra, Celebes, Borneo, Japan and China where Buddhism was popular and influential religion. This situation may explain the reason for the likeness of the five commandments in the religion of Bathala and those of Buddhism.

"Here is the Tagalog doctrine regarding religion and morality; and observe in it, alike in its uses and customs, even in customary practices, the ground of ancient civilization.

"Bathala, with his single and universal substance; the metempsychosis and transmigration of souls, and

1. Paterno, Pedro A., The Ancient Tagalog Civilization,
p. 56

the absorption into the eternal being, proceed from Brahmanism... "The good soul is one with Brahma or Bathala after death; the bad soul is relegated to a lower body; animal, vegetable or mineral."¹

These religious ideas expressed by Paterno seemed attractive and convincing to De los Reyes. Probably they had served as one of the inspirations which led him to write and turn out the first volumes of an audacious work on the creation of the universe and the origin of religion, which had for its title, "The Divine Office of the Philippine Church". This was published in 1906. It has been considered by some students of history and literary criticism that this volume by De los Reyes was equally original if not so accurate as the now famous "Outline of History" by H.G. Wells. It reveals the keenness of De los Reyes' intellect and at the same time gives the reader an idea of the man's scientific attitude toward life and other things in the world and of his atheistic views of man and the Creator and Ruler of the universe. Another volume written and published by De los Reyes in 1908 in Barcelona was "The Filipino Bible, The First Stone for a Scientific Genesis According to Corrections Made by Jesus Christ." This book was adopted in the first year of its publication as the official Bible of the Aglipayan Church. It has one hundred and seventy-six pages, with illustrations of church dignitaries running over the four pages of its covers.

1. Laubäch, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 154

2. The Open Court, May, 1922

According to Laubach, who has carefully studied and appraised De los Reyes' work,

"The Biblia Filipino" selects paraphrases, and supplements sections, the missal and the Gospel harmonized, explained and expurgated of the thousand interpolations and contradictions which are carried by the canonical texts, in the light of the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and other ancient codices which are conserved in the libraries of Jerusalem, Rome, England, France, and Spain."¹

Several pages of the "Filipino Bible" reveal efforts of its author to compare it with the Christian's Bible. De los Reyes was an ardent admirer of Herschel, Kant, Laplace, Tolstoy, and Flammarion, and his thoughts and ideas were greatly influenced by the works of these men. His interest in astronomy and other sciences appeared in his mention of the planets in his book; he even drew "picture of the canals of Mars, Halley's comet, the moon, and other illustrations" which may be found in any text book used by students of astronomy.

De los Reyes' last volume was "The Cathecism of the Independent Filipino Church". This, like the first of his works, reveals the scientific views rather than the religious and philosophical views of the man who dominated tremendously the religious thinking, ideas and beliefs of the Aglipayan Movement. This volume contains 114 pages. The following is an exhibit of some of his questions asked as quoted by George Ballard Bowers in his article in The Open Court, May, 1922, under the heading, "Animism, Aglipay's Cult and Christianity."²

"Is God all powerful? Perhaps, but we are not sure.
Where did we get the pretended Trinity? From Plato.
What was the famous theory of Darwin? Haeckel?
How will the earth end? They moon? The planets?"

Bowers expressed his opinion that these and other questions in "The Catechism of the Independent Filipino Church" are designed to weaken the faith of the Christian reader.

Thus the doctrines of the Aglipayan Church are rationalistic, basing its system of thought upon the results of modern science. In the new church the Darwinian theory is accepted, bringing it into harmony with Biblical doctrine. In its teaching it denies the trinity of persons of the deity, but believes in a trinity of attributes and names. The explanation of this theological thinking accepted by the Aglipayans, is wholly new and peculiar to their church. It is based upon reasoning, upon scriptural text, and upon philosophic writings.

Any religious movement, if it has to make its life vital, dynamic, and influential, must have some sure and solid foundations for its beliefs and convictions. The writer is of the opinion that these prerequisites or conditions are sadly lacking in the Aglipayan Movement. It needs a sound and a practical system of theology based upon real spiritual experience of the life of God in the souls of its founders. It needs a true basis for a working philosophy of life that would ultimately bring men to ultimate truth and reality, and to right and proper understanding of themselves and the

1. Translation by P.H.J. Larrigo, M.D., of De los Reyes' gospel, taken from Mark's Gospel. Copies of this translation may be obtained from the American Northern Baptist Mission

2. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 154

universe within and without.

2. The doctrine of the Incarnation.

The question that confronts us in this phase of our discussion under the subject "The doctrine of the Incarnation" is: What is the teaching of the Independent Filipino Catholic Church concerning "divine incarnation?"

Here is what De los Reyes writes in his "Filipino Bible" which Dr. P. H. J. Lerrigo had translated some years ago for the American Northern Baptist Mission when he was in the Baptist mission field in the Philippines:

"The Eternal, by virtue of his limitless omnipotence, was incarnated in the bosom of the Blessed Virgin Mary, without intervention of man, with a special nature, sinless and divine. Although He had the appearance of a man He did not cease to be God; He was not a man as we are, but God with us...."¹

In this statement we find that divine incarnation is stressed. However, there is no explanation as to how this condition of God coming to the world in man's form affected the life, the conduct and destiny of man. De los Reyes took the Gospel of Mark as the basis of his gospel since it is "the oldest and most reliable of the evangelists."² This gospel does not seem to bring any happy hope to its readers since there is no indication of a belief that "God became flesh and dwelt among us"; that God can become incarnate in man.

3. The doctrine of Sin and of the Atonement.

The Aglipayan Church does not put emphasis on the idea and reality of sin in its teachings. The position which it holds concerning sin and redemption from sin is expressed

1. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 153

2. Ibid.

in the following statement:

"It denies original sin, as well as the view that the consequences of such sin were expiated through Jesus Christ, but it maintains that Christ's sacrifice has redeemed us from our errors, passions, and weaknesses by means of his divine attributes and inimitable example, but not through actual material sacrifice."¹

The view of the Aglipayan Church in regard to man's salvation is humanistic. Christ's giving up of Himself, according to the Aglipayan belief, was not to atone for our sin. "Man is saved by his own efforts through following the example given by Christ and through striving and possessing the same qualities that Christ had which He had manifested in His life on earth."²

Archbishop Aglipay though he intrusted the shaping of the policy of the Independent Filipino Catholic Church to his colleague Sr. Isabelo de los Reyes, contribute something of his ideas to the thought life of the church. For the benefit of the reader in the matter understanding of Aglipayan theology, let us quote Monsieur Aglipay's statement concerning the significance of Jesus and of His mission and teaching.

"The treatises written about Jesus and His work would fill a hundred libraries. The greatest minds of the last twenty centuries have concentrated their best efforts on the study of that colossal figure who fills the annals of history with the daring and vibrant words of a dauntless rebel.

The Christian Churches have claimed the exclusive right of interpreting Him and have fallen into the most abject errors. The Filipino Independent Church alone has left this task to the wise so that it may garner from their impartial observations the most faithful and the most reasonable

1. Lopez, Santiago, Monsieur Aglipay and the
Religion of the Future

2. Ibid.

interpretation of the role of Jesus in the progress of humanity."¹

The above statements by Monsieur Aglipay were the opening sentences of his address before the delegates who attended the great ingathering of the Aglipayan held in Manila in February, 1936. Here is the interpretation by Aglipay of the mission of Jesus:

"The mission of Jesus has two phases which complement each other: the pro-Country phase exemplified in the audacious political program enunciated in the eight immortal beatitudes, and the pro-Humanity phase which is his political testament for the human and is embodied in the seven last words attributed to Him by the Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus preached the gospel of solid brotherhood and mutual helpfulness to defend the country to the last; He enjoined protection of the poor, condemning the egoism of the rich as the insuperable enduring progress; He preached among His followers that they may treat each other as brothers, the children of one Universal Father, and that they may help each other, the rich giving food to the poor...He exalted the poor, predicting their ultimate triumph over the rich and the mighty who exploited them. So greatly did He inflame their fervid love of country that He was at the point of annihilating the Roman legions and the power of the priests and Pharisees throughout Judea and even beyond the Jordan. But precisely when He was about to deliver the coup de grace, the treacherous Judas betrayed Him into the hands of Caiaphas, Annas, and other high priests. Due to the treachery of some and the cowardice of others, Jesus failed and was crucified as a common rebel."²

One would readily see how superficial and inadequate is Aglipay's understanding and knowledge of the Scriptures and of Jesus in the Scriptures and in the history of

human redemption. Aglipay's allusion to Jesus as a ^{43.} rebel who tried to inflame to fervid love of country and to use physical force to destroy the Roman rulers and Jewish religious autocracy, reveals the nationalistic and revolutionary spirit of the man who leads the Aglipayan Movement. His expression of his religious ideas is not a vindication of some great new and fundamental truth discovered or the presentation of the result of his vital personal experience of God. Rather it is the revelation of his hatred and contempt for things Spanish in the national life of his people. There is no sign that the meaning and significance of Christ and His Cross have become the center of life of the Aglipayan Movement.

The teaching of the church concerning the idea and meaning of sin and of the need of redemption by Jesus Christ seems merely a trivial and superficial thing. The Movement seems to be interested primarily in the science of religion, and the religion of science rather than in the experience of truth and of God for the highest good of the individual and of the whole world.

4. Interpretation of the Resurrection of Christ.

The Filipino Independent Church has a peculiar idea concerning the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Mention has already been made of the Filipino Bible and some passages have already been quoted.

1. Translations by Rev. P. H. J. Lerrigo from Reyes' gospel for the Aglipayan Church

However, let us go back once more to this volume to find out what De los Reyes had explained about the resurrection. The following is the translation by Dr. Lerrigo from Reyes' gospel for the new church, which was originally written in Spanish:

"But Mary Magdalene remained without near the sepulchre, and standing thus weeping, she stooped down to look into the sepulchre; and not finding her idolized master, but only those painful souvenirs which were left (his body having been removed to another grave), there came upon her, in the face of the desparate idea that she might never see him again, her well-beloved, a crisis or an infinite anguish, and in the intensity of her bitterness she lost consciousness and became as one seeing a vision of angles (as says St. Luke 24:23), and she saw two angels dressed in white seated, the one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said to her, Woman, why weepest thou? She answered, Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him. And having said this she turned about and saw Jesus standing; but she did not recognize Him. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? ' She, thinking it was the gardener, responded, 'Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou has laid Him and I will take Him away.' Jesus said to her: 'Mary'. She recognized suddenly the affectionate voice of her beloved, was carried away by delirious jubilation, and with all the enthusiasm and tenderness of which a loving daughter is capable, upon seeing her adored father resurrected, exclaimed: 'Rabboni!' (which signifies Master, in the diminutive of affection); but when she attempted to embrace the feet of her phantasmagoric Master, the vision disappeared."1

The above interpretation of the resurrection is one which is purely spiritual. It is a peculiar and characteristic idea of the resurrection of Jesus held by the Aglipayan Church. Aglipay himself expressed his personal belief in the resurrection of Jesus and explained it in this way:

1. Lopez, Santiago, Monsieur Aglipay and the Religion of the Future. A pamphlet containing Bishop Aglipay's views.

"The Magdalene, passionate and crazed with sorrow, took it to mean (Jesus word 'All is ended') that the redemption of the Jewish people was consummated. She was convinced from then on that Jesus would rise again to secure the liberty and the glory of the people of Israel; and in effect, on the next day she brought fragrant flowers and aromatic herbs to the sepulchre to cover the pathway of the Master upon His resurrection."¹

Aglipay also expressed belief that Jesus did not die on the cross, neither did He resuscitate. He treated the resurrection and ascension records in the Gospels as fiction "fabricated no doubt to attract the superstitious Jews and pagans who could not conceive a divinity without miracles."² Aglipay gives a naturalistic interpretation of the miraculous deeds of Jesus and the Independent Church of the Philippines is inclined to accept this form of interpretation. It accepts the interpretation of the resurrection in the same category since there is no such thing as supernatural event or phenomenon in the realm of Science as Aglipay conceives it.

Monsieur Aglipay asserted that the Christianity of the future would be based on the life, passion, and death of Jesus rationalized, without the episodes of silly marvels and supernatural details. He suggested that in order to preserve Jesus, Christians have to purge the gospels of the fantasies that adulterate them.

As the tendency of the Aglipayan Movement is toward Unitarianism, the view of the resurrection of Christ held by the Apostles, the early Christians and those of our day who have hope in this life and in the life to come, is

1. Quoted in Willis: Our Philippine Problem.

2. Ibid.

considered ridiculous by Aglipay and a great majority of his followers. They may be sincere and honest in their effort "to keep ourselves free and progressive and to unmask those who have fallen into the error of deifying Jesus to exploit the people," but the writer doubts very much their success unless the dislike and hatred in their hearts and minds against Roman Catholicism is changed by the compelling love and irresistible grace of Jesus Christ into love and forgiveness and unselfish service to their fellow men.

There is a great challenge to all those who have the New Testament form of religion to bring into the Aglipayan Movement the reality and the dynamics of Christian experience and faith.

5. Church Polity.

The Aglipayan leaders aim in the constitution and rules of their church,

"To re-establish a purer democracy and the common holding of wealth which Jesus preached and the disciples practiced." ¹

They aim to re-establish evangelical truth, distorted and adulterated as it has been by the Romish teachers, and "to restore the pre-eminence of the Filipino clergy, which has been usurped by the friars." ²

The writer's experience with the Aglipayans in their worship services and in the conduct of the government of their organization that the Filipino Independent Church has something of an approach to congregation polity. The participation of the laity in the activities of the church, such as in

1. Lopez, Santiago, Monsieur Aglipay and the Religion
of the Future

matters of ritual, is a fundamental doctrine and practice.

Perhaps it may give a clearer view of the polity of the church if we present here what Aglipay himself had to say on the subject.

In his sermon before the delegates to the Aglipayan convention held in Manila in 1936 he said:

"Our Church believes that the indifference of the thinking classes to the churches is due to the fact that organized religion seeks to impose its doctrines with the infallible authority of Pope or a Bible, and the learned man naturally rebels against imposition. We attempt to eliminate that antagonism between our Church and the intelligence of our devotees by recognizing the human conscience as the Supreme doctrinal authority. All that conscience condemns, be these sanctioned by Pope or by Scripture, we condemn. It is for this, perhaps, that our official doctrines have been received with spontaneous favor by learned people in Europe and American, because all of them are in absolute accord with the dictates of conscience and with proven facts.

This is one of the characteristics which distinguish the Filipino Independent Church; while obsolete religious dogmas were endangered by the advance of progress and scientific truth, and are divorced from the modern world by their retrogressive influence, a considerable number of contemporary men of science have applauded our ritual because it destroys the attempt to encase religion in immutable molds and applies the deductive and scientific methods to the solution of religious enigmas."¹

These declarations by Aglipay reveal the democratic or liberal ideal of Aglipayan Church. Although this presentation of ideas has no direct bearing upon the polity of the church, it points toward some of the views held by Protestantism.

Roman Catholic priests are not allowed to marry, but this is not true of the Aglipayan priesthood. The priests and deaconesses may marry,

"although if it be possible, it is preferable that they remain free from the cares of a family in order that they may give themselves entirely to the service of the Lord."

No divorce is allowed under any circumstance.

There are thirty bishops and about four hundred priests serving the church. At first foreigners were not admitted into the priesthood but now there are several of them working side by side with native Filipino priests.

The languages used are Spanish and Ilocano. However, the mass usually is said in the native tongue so that the people could understand it.

To sum up the content of this chapter we may state that the Aglipayan Movement had some characteristics peculiar to itself: And these are found in its type or system of religious thoughts and ideas, in its ritual and congregational type of polity, and in the fact that its priesthood may marry.

CHAPTER IV

THE AGLIPAYAN CHURCH AND PROTESTANTISM

Those of the West who are not familiar with Philippine history in general and with the Aglipayan movement in particular would probably have the impression that the Aglipayan Church was a Protestant church like those in Europe and America that came out of the Protestant Reformation movement. Certainly the sins of injustices which the Spanish ecclesiastical and civil rulers had committed against the Filipinos during the entire course of Spanish-Philippine relations did not fail to create opposition and to raise a voice of protest. But the spirit that gave rise to Protestantism in Europe and had produced a Luther, a Zwingli, a Knox, a John Wesley, and a host of other reformers did not make itself manifest in the Aglipayan movement nor was it found evident in the lives of its leaders.

The founders of the Aglipayan Church did not and do not have adequate knowledge of the Word of God; they did not have vital personal experience of the spirit and power of God in their lives. Neither Aglipay nor De los Reyes, foremost leaders of the movement, could say to their followers with certainty and courage of conviction as Luther did, that "the just shall live by faith." The understanding and forgiving love, the redeeming and life-giving grace of God in Jesus Christ, was not the generating energy, the radiating force, the motivating power in the lives of the Aglipayan leaders. On the other hand, it was intense hatred for the Spanish friars and extreme nationalist spirit that

led them to establish the Filipino Independent Catholic Church.

This new church had no message to give to the world, not even to its followers, since it did not have any system of Christian thought or Christian theology such as the Roman church and the Protestant churches in Europe and America have. Its leaders, but particularly De los Reyes who was not a theological student and not a priest but who was responsible in formulating its rules, were more interested in science rather than in religion; they were more deeply concerned with national independence than with true spiritual or religious freedom. Thus from 1902 when the Aglipayan Church was first organized up to the present, both leaders and followers have been wandering over spiritual deserts looking for some ways of escape. What the Aglipayan movement really needed at the very beginning of its life was a wholesome knowledge of and a reasonable faith in the true and living God whom Jesus Christ had revealed as written in the Sacred Scriptures, and to whom the lives and experiences of men in every age had given testimony. The same need still exists for this church today. Protestantism, the genuine expression of free Christian spirit and evangelical faith, should not overlook such a need. It should not fail to arouse missionary interest and to challenge the Protestant Christians in and outside the Philippines.

1. Attitude of the Aglipayans toward Protestantism

The Aglipayan Church does not have the prejudices that

1. Forsher, Rev. A.A. in The Standard, November 11,
1905, Chicago, Illinois

the Roman Catholic Church has. As one observer had said, "it is open to conviction on religious things."¹ By this is meant that the church leaders and members who are intelligent enough to know what is best for them as a religious body, are not afraid to make some investigations of other religious institutions and their teachings in order to learn new truths from them. Starting from this point, a question such as this might be raised: What is the attitude of the Aglipayans toward the Christian message as found in Protestantism?

In the first place, the founders of the Filipino Independent Catholic Church have been from the beginning, friendly and openminded in their attitude toward Protestant Christianity. They began to realize that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism do not go together. And they, being anti-Roman, sought the friendly cooperation of American Protestant Christians in the Islands to establish a strong independent Catholic Church. Aglipay himself, in a personal conference with a group of American missionaries in 1902, told them of his plans to rend the Roman Church in the Philippines in twain. He invited them to join in common cause with him. But the missionaries told him that it was impossible for them to unite with a movement like his, which did not make the Scriptures the rule and guide in doctrine and life. They urged him to study the situation more carefully and throw his strength and effort into the Protestant movement. He made a promise that he would

1. Laubach, F.C., The People of the Philippines, p. 147

2. Briggs, Rev. C.W., Statement written in the Islands
in 1904

carefully consider the suggestion of indorsing the Word of God,¹ but he did not give any indication of a purpose to join the Protestant cause.

One of the clear examples of Aglipayan attitude toward Protestantism, though it was revealed during the early years of the movement, is well presented in the following statement:

"It is reactionary against all that is essentially friar policy and practice. Aglipay is interested in the Bible and in much that is Protestant, but his cults are the Roman masses and only that.... The Aglipayanos are very friendly and openly so with us. They count themselves as almost siding with us against Rome. But we are very conservative about identifying ourselves with them for obvious reasons... I pray for the coming of the right man to deal with Aglipay himself, and through him with his great following, to win them to the truth. They have open minds yet, and may still be reached before their movement crystallizes into something as bad as Romanism or worse. Aglipay is sincere. He had a conference with one of our workers and said to him, 'If you can clear up difficulties and convince me that your faith is the true one of Christ and of the Apostles, I will join you.'"²

However, according to the writer's personal view and opinion, this attitude is no longer true today as it was thirty years ago. This change of attitude toward Protestantism has been due to lack of understanding on the part of the Aglipayans themselves in regard to the meaning of the Christian message. Three centuries of their Roman Catholic experience and historical background had left an influence upon their thought-life which has become almost impossible to shake off and be replaced by that of Protestantism. Also, their nationalist spirit makes them suspicious if not fearful, of the idea that the Protestant

movement might hinder their progress toward the achievement of political independence. Their Roman Catholic brothers share with them in this unfounded belief.

The Aglipayans have not been able to grasp yet and understand the real significance of the Christian message as the Protestant forces bring it to them. The leaders of Protestant Christianity in the Islands have been trying to make it clear that the world mission of Christianity does not in any way interfere with healthful national aspirations. Enlightened patriotism and true religion plight their troth and unite the best that the have to make possible a Christian internationalism. Jesus himself descended from a people who loved their little country with a self-giving devotion that has seldom been equalled. The genuine Jew in his best moments saw his fatherland as the hope and salvation of mankind. For nearly a thousand years he fought and bled, he prayed for the right of self-government, and through it all was encouraged and supported by a firm conviction and by an abiding sense of mission. Then the Man of Galilee, Jesus, caught up in His own great heart the high hopes and longings and desires of the Hebrew race. From His human and divine lips there first fell in clear notes of authority the principles of love and brotherhood which were bound to give weak individuals and nations their opportunity. Wise, unselfish national hopes find a ready answer in the heart of the great Teacher.

Also, it has been and is the policy of the Protestant Church in the Philippines to make it clear to all, but

especially to the Aglipayans who are more nationalistic in their attitude, that Jesus always insisted upon man's God-given right to think for himself and to act in concert with a conscience free and untrammelled by any human power. The history of the Christian church is full of bright examples of men and women who gave up their lives rather than their freedom. Such a faith and such a conviction and heritage can have only sympathy and encouragement for Filipino patriots and nationalists. Yet this truth has not been generally and thoroughly understood. As has already been mentioned, the leaders of the Filipino Independent Church with the majority of their followers have been suspicious of and opposed to the Protestant Church, being afraid that it might become an agent of exploitation. No doubt this fear has been due to the haunting memory of the old Roman Church that joined forces with the Spanish government and did much harm and damage to the people.

In the second place, the Aglipayans today have a passive if not an indifferent attitude toward Protestantism. In a letter received by the writer from one of the American missionaries whose station is in the island of Negros where the Aglipayan movement has one of its strongholds, it is stated that "there is not much opposition nor cooperation on the part of the Aglipayanos in regard to our Protestant work, except in some local cases."¹ This attitude of indifference is one of the hardest elements that stand in the

2. Coggins, Miss May in a letter to the writer,
Bacolod, Occ. Neg. P. I., Nov. 30, 1937

way of a more effective and progressive evangelization of the Philippines. It is true that the Aglipayans are more tolerant than the Romanists, but tolerance is only found among the few who are better educated and enlightened than the rest. Also, the attitude of this particular religious body differs according to educational, economic and social advantages and opportunities. For example, the well-to-do- Aglipayan who could afford to send his son or daughter to an institution of higher learning would not care if he or she goes to a Protestant college where better training, better social contacts, and better living conditions are being provided. Thus,

"We find that most of our converts come from the Aglipayan group... They are not nearly as prejudiced as the Roman Catholics. They do not find it difficult to give up their loyalty to their own church when they find a power and vitality in the faith as we present it... We have two Aglipayan priests in Negros who trained at Central Philippine College. They have a fine knowledge of the Bible and have been rather fine priests in their influence."¹

However, those who live in hamlets and villages with limited social and without the religious contacts that large educational and cultural towns and cities could offer, are more passive and unreciprocal in their attitude toward the Protestant faith. The opening of many private schools and academies throughout the Islands by the Protestant missions in which educational and religious instructions are given has helped to eliminate this type of attitude. These mission schools are doing fairly well along this line of effort.

1. Munger, H.W., in a letter to the writer, Dec. 2, 1937

In his letter to the writer in December 2, 1937, Reverend Henry W. Munger, a Baptist missionary to the Philippines for more than three decades, who is now Director of Evangelism for the Baptist Convention of the Philippines, made these summary statements which revealed the present attitude of the Aglipayans toward Protestantism:

"The Aglipayan Church offers a promising field for evangelical work.

"The evangelical leaders are friendly to the Evangelical Christians.

"Some of the Aglipayan priests received their education in the public schools, Silliman University, and Central Philippine College."¹

These statements imply that the Aglipayans are beginning to realize the value and necessity of changing their indifferent and passive attitude toward Protestantism. They feel that they could not live and function as a religious and social group and at the same time render their service to the nation if they remain inactive and indifferent toward other groups, like the Protestants for example. Furthermore, they feel that they could not long exist or continue to exist as a church body without some moral and religious grounds on which to stand. Well may they look to Protestant Christianity for inspiration and guidance. But happily the present generation of Aglipayans, especially their youth, are conscious of the possibilities of boundless self-development along intellectual, moral, and spiritual lines. They have the fulness of freedom which they could not enjoy in Roman or Aglipayan circles.

In general, Aglipayan attitude toward Protestantism has been a change from that of indifference and inactive to one of friendliness and careful study and scrutiny of Protestant teachings. The Protestant Church should not fail to understand and interpret this attitude as a challenge an opportunity to win the Aglipayans to the Christian way of life.

2. Protestant Attitude toward Aglipayanism.

While on the one hand the attitude of the Aglipayans toward Protestantism has been friendly and understanding, that of the Protestants has been rather conservative and reserved. They are not at all unfriendly, indifferent, or suspicious toward the Aglipayan Church. However, their conservatism is due to their stand on religious and moral issues which are not in the realm of Aglipayan beliefs and practices. For example, Aglipayanism accepts the evolutionary theory of Darwin, and the belief of the Humanists concerning the origin, the life, and the destiny of man. The Aglipayans seem to accept only the scientific view and explanation of life, of God, and of the universe. There are many Filipinos, particularly from the ranks of the Aglipayan circles, who think they have weighed the claims of Christianity in the balances of modernism and science and have found them wanting. A large group of young people believe the Bible and Christianity to be discredited. They are having difficulty in arriving at some definite basis on which they could base their faith, be

it intellectual, scientific, or spiritual, and from that point work out their way to the knowledge of truth.

On the other hand, Protestants leave the door wide open for truth and faith and reason to work out the solution of the religious, theological and philosophical enigmas and problems of man in regard to the meaning of life and of the universe. They do not misappreciate the efforts of the scientists nor discredit the achievements of science in the fields of scientific and material discovery, which bring truth, or lead man to the knowledge of truth. This attitude is not true with the Aglipayans, for Aglipayanism is more devoted to science than to the Christian religion. For instance, the Aglipayans explain the significance of the resurrection of our Lord in a scientific way. Jesus, according to their belief, did not die on the cross; he just fainted while hanging there. And when he was in the grave, he revived. Then his disciples came and set him free from the tomb. As to what became of him after this, they do not give any explanation. The Protestant understanding, view, and belief concerning the resurrection is not in harmony with that represented in Aglipayanism. Protestants believe and accept the historical accounts and explanation of the resurrection as given by the writers of the four gospels and by the Apostles, but they retain their belief in the supernatural phenomena in connection with the resurrection although they do not stop at this point. It is just one

1. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 150

2. Ibid.

of the basic foundations of their faith in the living God, and of their belief in the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ the Supreme Revealer of God and Savior of all men.

Dr. Jose Rizal, greatest of Filipino patriots and martyrs to the cause of freedom and democracy in the Philippines, had been sainted by the Filipino Independent Catholic Church, and each passing year tells the increasing popular recognition. The Novena del Dr. Jose Rizal (Prayer book of Dr. Jose Rizal) published in 1919, tries to point out that Rizal, being more scientific than Jesus could have been, avoided certain scientific errors into which Jesus and his contemporaries had fallen.¹ It has been reported in the newspapers in 1922, that Bishop Aglipay had said the following:

"Rizal, to us Filipinos, is more than a saint. He is the true Filipino messiah, whose coming we had longed to see during our colonial days."²

Should this type of religious thinking and belief continue to develop and place Rizal in a position higher than that of Jesus it would make it impossible for Protestants to be reconciled with Aglipayans. Perhaps it would hasten the coming of the day when the Aglipayan Church would be dissolved, for most of its members are still Christians, are, indeed, Catholics except that they do not give their allegiance to the so-called Holy See in Rome.

The peculiar doctrines and beliefs of the Aglipayans create a feeling of sympathy and an attitude of vital concern on the part of evangelical Christians toward Aglipayanism.

For Christian Filipinos, especially Protestants, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as the only hope of all the world. Many of them look at the Independent Church as Aglipay's cult, and Aglipayanism as un-Christian.

To conclude our discussion on this matter of Protestant attitude toward Aglipayanism, one might ask this question:

What is then the message of Protestant Christianity to the Aglipayan movement? The real answer to this question is a tremendous challenge to those with true evangelical faith who are loyal to Jesus Christ and obedient to his great commission. For the religion of Jesus is an active, positive and dynamic religion and one that truly saves. Its message of hope and salvation is also for the Aglipayans who could be won to Him through loving, understanding, sympathetic and friendly Christian attitude. Happily, this type of attitude is being developed and maintained by Protestant Christians, not only toward Aglipayanism but also toward other faiths.

3. Extent of Cooperation Between the Two Groups

Wherever and whenever friendly understanding and intelligent goodwill exist between individuals or groups, cooperation between them is possible. And such cooperation could be carried on to a smaller or greater extent according to the consciousness of the common responsibilities and mutual benefits being felt and recognized by both cooperating bodies. In some cases this is true in regard to the Aglipayans and the Protestants of the Philippines.

Fifteen years ago the writer had opportunity to notice and observe some of the religious and social phases of life in his home community in the Islands. One case of particular interest to him had to do with the cooperation between Protestant and Aglipayan groups. The question arose, "Where shall the Protestants and Aglipayans bury their dead? In the Roman Catholic cemetery?" No. The Roman priest would not let them do it; it was against the religious belief and practice of the Roman Church to allow other faiths to invade their ground. It was always the Roman teaching that those outside the Roman Catholic faith were lost and so they had nothing to do with Protestants and Aglipayans, whom they said "were of the devil."

In order to solve this common problem, the Aglipayan and Protestant leaders of the community met together and decided to buy a piece of land belonging to some private person and then transformed it into a burying place for their dead. Today such a Protestant-Aglipayan cemetery stands in Janiway Iloilo, Philippines, as one example of cooperation between the two religious bodies. Another example of cooperation between Protestants and Aglipayans was in connection with the social and moral welfare of the community. This common welfare particularly concerned with the abolition of dance halls, gambling, and cock-fights. Some good Aglipayans and Protestants believed in dancing just within the family circle and with relatives and intimate friends; but they did not believe in commu-

cialized dancing such as the dance halls provided. They considered such type of amusement as degrading and demoralizing, especially on the part of youth, who were to become the leaders of the community and nation. Then there were two other forms of vice and crime in the community which they considered a curse in family and community life. They believed that as Christians they should take a definite stand on the social and moral issues and deal aggressively with sin and crime that drag society down. Thus the leaders of the two groups united their strength and wisdom by formulating and presenting a written petition to the law-making body of the municipality to the effect that dance halls, gambling dens and cock pits should be closed. With the law back of them, they succeeded in their fight for decency and order in their community.

In the realm of social relations, the Aglipayans and the Protestants get along together in a more friendly and understanding way than they can with the Roman Catholics. The author remembers that an Aglipayan would drop in at the chapel and worship in a Protestant service, but hardly would he do it in the Roman Church. This case may be rare today, but in the early days of the Aglipayan movement, it was a very common happening. The Aglipayans are more friendly toward Protestants than toward the Romanists. Young people belonging to the Roman Church would not mingle with the young people of the

Aglipayan or the Protestant church because the Roman priests warn them of the dangers that might grow out of such relationships with non-Catholics. The fear on the part of the Roman priests is based on the supposition that they might lose followers from the young generation. For those who are converted today to Protestantism are mostly young people, students who live in or near the dormitories and Student Christian centers managed and supervised by American missionaries and Filipino Protestant Christians. Naturally, these students who are in constant contact with Protestant groups are influenced by their ideas and Christian ways of life. The result is, that they become Protestants. In the Protestant schools the students live in an atmosphere and a spirit of freedom. An Aglipayan student or a Roman Catholic student enjoys this freedom as much as the Protestant student does. They are all free to think and to make right and proper choices. Their parents or their priests could not take away from them this God-given right, freedom, and opportunity. In fact, this is one of the most winsome features in Protestant belief and teaching, and draws both young and old to Christianity from the non-Protestant bodies in the Islands.

On the whole, while the Aglipayan movement does not cooperate with the Protestant cause, it does not hinder nor oppose it. On the other hand, the Protestants cooperate with the Aglipayans only in matters which they consider as important and necessary and which do not come

in conflict with their evangelical faith and doctrines.

4. American Protestant Missionaries and the Aglipayans.

Protestant missionaries from America began to arrive in Manila as early as 1899. The times were ripe for Protestantism. The Filipinos began their last great struggle in 1896 to free themselves from friar rule, and their efforts toward this end did not cease until the coming of Protestant America in 1900 to establish sovereignty over the Islands. The Filipinos did not have any intention whatsoever of separating from the pope whom they believed to be the holder of the door key to their eternal salvation. Their earnest desire was to do away with the friars and have their own priests. But this could not be done, for it meant breaking away with the pope and shutting themselves out of heaven. But when they found a Moses and a Joshua in Don Isabelo de los Reyes and Father Gregario Aglipay, they became convinced that somehow they would be able to reach their land of promise, and thus they left the pope's and the friars' domain. Their leaders led them out of bondage into a spiritual wilderness from which they are still trying to escape. Their leader and their captain were as ignorant and unfamiliar as they were of the way. When the missionaries came the Aglipayans were in spiritual darkness and confusion.

Ever since the early beginnings of the Aglipayan movement its leaders have been trying to court the friend-

1. Laubach, F.C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 146 ff.

ship and win the help of American Protestant workers all over the Philippines. But, as Frank C. Laubach points out,

"The missionaries were unfavorable to the new church for four reasons: in ritual, it was too Roman; in theology, too rationalistic; in ethics, too Spanish; and in politics, too independista. The first three of these reasons might have been adjusted, for the new church was groping in the dark for a theology to fit its need. But the memory that the leaders of this church had so recently of war kept Americans in a state of morbid suspicion toward it. The American Commission was outspoken in its belief that the Aglipay movement had political motives."¹

There is no doubt but that the Movement had and still has political designs. In fact, it was the nationalist spirit that was more persistent than the religious spirit in the minds and hearts of the Aglipayan leaders which led them to found the Independent Catholic Church of the Philippines. It must be remembered that Aglipay was an insurrecto-priest who made great forages on the American forces in northern Luzon during the Philippine revolution of 1898-1902, against the United States. He had led his guerilla bands successfully in the Iloos provinces by appealing to their patriotism and religious fanaticism. There was fear and doubt on the part of both missionaries and official representatives from the United States that Aglipay might use his movement in fulfilling his political ambitions.

However, most of the missionaries believed that the movement would be temporary and would be an effective means of leading people away from Catholicism to evangelical Christianity.

1.. Stuntz, H.C., The Philippines and the Far East,
p. 495. N.Y. and Cincinnati, 1904

The American missionaries also believed that when the Aglipayan movement died out, its followers would join any Protestant denomination. Homer C. Stuntz, an optimist in this group of missionaries expressed his belief that,

"Aglipay will yet take a more advanced spiritual and moral ground. His own personal belief is far from being in accord with some errors at which he feels it necessary to wink lest he lose his following. He hopes to lead them to greener pastures later on."¹

The time and opportunity for Aglipay to take a more advanced spiritual and moral ground has been long overdue. The missionaries have been and still are trying to help Aglipay in constructing a wholesome and practical Christian theology for his church. But for fear that he might lose his position and power, he holds himself aloof and remains heedless of any Protestant suggestion. Happily, the young leaders of the Aglipayan church are coming closer to Protestant missionaries for suggestions and sometimes for advice along religious, moral, and social problems.

The attitude of American Protestant missionaries toward the Aglipayans and Aglipayanism, is one of deep concern. However, they are cautious and conservative in their dealing especially with Aglipayan leaders, for their love and passion for souls are guided by reason and common sense, by tact and foresight as to the place of their work and influence in the present and future life of the nation. Just recently the writer received a letter from one of the Baptist missionaries in the Islands. The following statement taken from that

1. Coggins, May, in a letter to the writer, Nov., 30,
1937

letter shows the attitude of the Protestant missionaries toward Aglipayans:

"There was a time recently when the Aglipayans made a move to establish a school for priests right next to our theological school at Central, asking if they could take some of the courses that Central Philippine College offered, only teaching their own peculiar doctrines in a separate class. It was considered but thought to be unwise by our group and thus the matter was dropped."¹

The Aglipayans are friendly, but also they are timid if not afraid, to lose their power and prestige by aligning with the missionaries. Nevertheless, not by compromise nor by passive action and attitude could they be brought to the influence of the Protestant Church, but by wisdom, by Christian attitude and positive action on the part of the missionaries. Through their interpretation of the spirit and mission of Jesus, the Aglipayan Filipinos and all the rest in the Islands will eventually be led into the fellowship of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH TODAY

Most of what has been set forth and discussed in the previous chapters deals with the Aglipayan Movement in retrospect. Its historical background depicting the conditions, elements, and forces that have brought into being a religious body in the Islands known as the Filipino Independent Catholic Church, has been carefully considered. Its distinctive features and the results of its contact with Protestantism, have been pointed out clearly and without prejudices of any kind.

This chapter concerns the portrayal of the present day situation, outlook, and significance of the future of the Aglipayan Church.

1. Extent of Membership

Geographically, membership in the Aglipayan Church includes practically all of the Philippine territory, except the Moro provinces of Mindanao and the islands in the Sulu archipelago where the Mohammedans are located. Protestants and Roman Catholics have mission work among the Moros but the Aglipayans have none. Their work seems to be only in those places where Roman Christianity has already been established. In fact, the church had gained its membership particularly from the Roman population. This topic shall be discussed more fully later in this section.

There are places in the Islands where the church has a conspicuously large following. For example, in Northern Luzon but particularly in the Ilocos provinces where Aglipay

as a Roman priest began his early ministry, literally hundreds of thousands of people have joined the church which he now heads. But it was principally due to his popularity as an insurgent general and as a general chaplain in General Aguinaldo's army during the Philippine insurrection against the United States that these people in those regions had been drawn to the church. In Manila a rather large group of people are loyal members of the church. It was here that Don Isabelo de los Reyes organized the first labor union in Philippines, which proclaimed a schism with Rome in 1902, and selected Aglipay as Obispo Maximo of the new Filipino Church.

In the Visayan islands a great number of people may be found in the Aglipayan communion. The town of Jaro in Iloilo, for instance, has a fine church with several thousand members. Likewise Bacolod, in Negros Occidental, has a strong church. Other places such as Cebu, Bohol, Leyte and Samar are the homes of many who are included in the membership of the church. In Mindanao in the south the Christian provinces of Misamis, Surigao and Zamboanga have among their population Aglipayans though noticeably few as compared with those in central and northern Philippines. These areas mentioned cover the whole geographical reach of the membership in the church today.

Turning to other phases of the Filipino Independent Church membership, one finds that those who are in the list are from every walk and station in life. It has been mentioned somewhere in this section that Aglipayanism

1. The World Almanac, 1936. Published by the New York
World - Telegram for San Francisco News, San Francisco,
California

2. International Review of Missions, April, 1929

gained its followers from the population of the country which was formerly mostly Roman Catholic. The first group consisted of leaders who had ardently advocated both religious and political separation from Spain. Bishop Aglipay, Isabelo de los Reyes, Honorable Santiago Fonacier, and others in the church today were among those in the group of prominent men who thirty-five years ago had worked hard for the freedom of their people. Others who had joined the movement from the beginning and who are still loyal to it were farmers, peasants, and common laborers whom the Spanish friars and civil officials had brutally abused. Disgruntled and embittered, they left the old church. The rest of the membership of the new church are students, ultra-nationalists, and strong supporters of the independent movement. It seems that their reason for joining the church is very largely based upon nationalism. The words "Filipino" and "independent" incorporated in the name of the national church supports this assumption.

There may be other types or classes of people in the membership of the Filipino Independent Catholic Church but those mentioned here seem to be the most important and significant.

According to the census of the Philippines for 1936, there were in the Islands 1,500,000 Independent Catholics.¹ Elmer K. Higdon, formerly a missionary in Manila and now a member of the staff of The International Missionary Council in New York City gives the same figures as above.² The writer's

estimate for 1938 is 1,400,000. These figures are not exactly accurate as they vary from time to time. However, one and a half million seems to be the closest figure.

As no available statistical data could be obtained concerning the distribution of the membership of the church over the Islands at the time of the writing of this thesis, no exact information can be given. In this respect one may just draw the assumption that since the Aglipayan movement grew and developed in Luzon and has its center there, therefore a great majority of the followers are to be found in that Island. Iloilo, Negros and Cebu are also strongholds of the Aglipayans, for these are vigorously nationalists and patriotic in their views and attitudes. Also, during the revolution against Spain, and later against the United States, religious and political leaders arose in these different islands.

2. Leadership

The success of any movement or enterprise, be it religious, social, or political, is determined by its leadership. It may rise or fall according to the strength or weakness, the presence or absence of wisdom, and character on the part of those who lead and guide its destiny. The same rule may be applied in the case of the Independent Catholic Church of the Philippines.

The head of the church at present is Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, foremost leader and founder of the movement that bears his name. Under him are several bishops whom he has

1. Ballard, Major George, in The Open Court, May, 1922

appointed and assigned to different parts of the Islands. Their duties and functions are similar to or almost the same as those of the bishops in the Roman Church. They are charged with the task of appointing priests for vacant or new churches in their respective fields or bishoprics. The third group of leaders are the priests. Their parishes are in all sorts of communities from a small village or town to the large cities such as Manila, Jaro, San Fernando, in Pangasinan, Vigan, Batac, Apari, Bacolod, Cebu, and others.

With the exception of Aglipay, who had college and seminary education and training, most of the bishops and priests today are men with meager education along religious and social lines. For as George Ballard Bowers puts it,

"Aglipay appointed priests from every station in life to be assigned to the vacant parishes after three months training."¹

Prominent men, who are interested in the affairs of the church, are appointed as bishops or priests, especially the Independistas, according to their aptitudes and inclinations. Or, a priest who has been in the same position before while in the Roman church and has a wide influence and reputation as an able religious leader, is made bishop. Students in Protestant colleges who have come from Aglipayan churches are appointed as priests or as bishops upon completion of their college courses. This method of selecting a bishop or a priest to serve in the Independent

1.. Laubach, Frank C., The People of the Philippines,
p. 157

Catholic church, seems to the writer both unwise and unsound. Leadership of this type is incompetent and tends to secularize the church, and to make it like other organizations having no distinct or definite functions, as interpreters of the spirit, will, and purpose of God, or as helpers of the people in their spiritual and moral problems and needs. The leaders may be honest, sincere and intelligent, but leadership without moral strength of character, and with no real spiritual vision and power behind it can only lead people to irreligiosity and worldliness. This condition exists in the Aglipayan church today in regard to its leadership and its life in general.

What Frank C. Laubach wrote in 1924, about the church and its leadership, is still true today:

"Multitudes of Aglipayans are good Christians, but there are many others who are living vicious lives with no open word of protest from their church. Creeds, no matter how excellent, without life are vain."¹

This statement supports the observation of the author that most of the church leaders do not have active interest in the moral and religious uplift of their parishioners, and indeed are unable to supply the need for inward strength and power in the lives of their congregation as they themselves are morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. This is not an accusation or a condemnation of the entire leadership but rather it is the pointing out of what appears to be the real condition existing in the church at present. This state of affairs is further made clear by the following

1. Coggins, Miss May, in a letter sent to the writer from Bacolod, P. I., Nov. 30, 1937
2. Palmejar, Carlos E., in a letter to the writer from Manila, P. I., Oct. 12, 1937

statements concerning some of the things that are taking place in the actual life of certain church leaders:

"The church here in Bacolod is fairly strong; but the sad thing is, that the man who is its President and has a family of lovely children lives with a woman who is not his legal wife. He is a brilliant attorney and his own wife is in the insane asylum."¹

"Don Isabelo, the real brain behind the Aglipay Church is now growing old and less and less active. The daughters are going back to the Roman Church, while the sons are loyal to the church of their father. The sons or the daughters, I am not sure which, sued the other (sons and daughters affair) for the alienation of affection of their father because evidently Don Isabelo is living either with the sons or the daughters. This controversy is an open secret to the members of the Aglipayan church. For this reason, the members are losing faith in the soundness of the church's leadership."²

While these and other instances not mentioned here give an idea of the kind of leadership the church has today, they also lead to an understanding of some of its weaknesses and points of strength. This is the theme which the third section attempts to discuss.

3. Weaknesses and Points of Strength

Every religious group or body no matter how good and true and unselfish its purposes are, is not always without its weaknesses. The Aglipayan Church is not an exception to this rule.

First of all, before setting forth elements of weakness in the church, mention should be made of its points of strength. In the first place, the strength of the church is principally that fervor and love of country and race which demands freedom, justice, and equality for all classes of people. This has been from the beginning the unifying

and binding force in the life of the movement. Most of the enlightened and patriotic men and women outside the Protestant communions are being drawn to the church by it. Another strong feature is its fearless and independent attitude in connection with man's search for knowledge in the scientific, philosophical, and spiritual realms. Both Aglipay and De los Reyes, the two most outstanding leaders of the movement, have been characterized by this kind of freedom. A third element of strength is the very fact of the existence of the Filipino Independent Church. Imperfect as it is, it presents a challenge and provides an opportunity for those who would build the true Church of Christ here on the earth.

Concerning the weaknesses of the church, attention is called to the following points:

First, Aglipayanism has practically no sound Christian theology fitted for the needs of the Filipinos. Its present system of theology is almost wholly based upon the results of modern science and rational thinking, leaving no place for Christian beliefs and the Christian philosophy of life. In the third Chapter mention has been made concerning the theological views and beliefs in the church. Therefore there is no need of going further in the discussion of this part of the subject.

Second, Another weakness of the Church is found in its lack of pure and Christian standards of ethics for its clergy and laity. Ethics is not a matter of nationality,

but it seems that the Aglipayan Filipinos, like their Roman Catholic brethren, have learned the habits and acquired the customs of the Spaniards through long years of contact with them. The old Spanish moral laxity is noticeable in the life and conduct of many in the membership in the church.

Mention has already been made of the incident in the life of a certain church leader in Bacolod, Negros Occidental, concerning a man who lived with a woman who was not his legal wife. Another similar case happened in a town near the writer's home. A rich young man in the Aglipayan communion fell in love with a certain high school girl. He had a wife and two children but he left them for some length of time and lived with the girl. But when difficulty arose between him and the girl's parents, he left the girl who was not his legal wife and returned to his wife and children. These examples in regard to morality and life do not apply to the general Aglipayan population. But they do exist to a greater or lesser extent and indicate the need for moral strength in the life of the people.

The moral and ethical standards of the Aglipayans are the same as those of the Romanists. But as compared with those of the Protestants theirs are far below. The Protestants have very definite and firm grounds in this stand for great and vital moral, social, and religious issues. Members of the Protestant communions in the islands are strict and careful in observing and practicing Christian teachings on moral, social, and spiritual values. They

believe in the infinite worth of every individual human being and in the sacredness of personality. These seem to be out of the realm of Aglipayan beliefs. The Protestants have Christian attitudes toward the home, the family, and human relations. The Aglipayans do not appear to pay much attention to these things.

A third element of weakness in the church is its reliance upon the nationalist spirit forgetting that the spirit of Jesus is the life of every true Christian body or organization. Having its origin, growth, and development in Philippine soil, Aglipayanism became the national religion of one and a half million people. It places the love of country and race above that of God's universal Kingdom and his children in every land. It is probably due to this fact that the Protestant missionaries are holding back their support from the church as being too independista in politics and too narrow in its interpretation of the meaning of nationalism. This attitude and view held by them may be traced back to their experience in the past with the Spaniards and to the history of their struggle for religious and political freedom. Also, one must have in mind that the Christianity with which they have been familiar allowed them no initiative to think for themselves and to work for the solution of their problems and needs.

The last and the most conspicuous weakness of the Filipino Independent Church today is its lack of sound, intelligent, well-trained and consecrated Christian leaders.

1. Palmejar, Carlos E., in a letter to the writer

2. Coggins, May, in a letter to the writer

Father Aglipay, who is the head bishop, is now growing old and is suffering from senility. His movement is daily losing ground. The younger leaders of the church are men without sufficient religious training and experience.

The church does not have any theological schools and seminaries for the training of its young people for priesthood and other positions of leadership. It used to have a few seminaries in the provinces of Ilocos, Norte, and Ilocos Sur during the first few years of the movement, but lack of teachers and of financial support from the people brought the institutions to an end.

The church must, above all, have a vision and a sense of need for its present as well as for its future spiritual and intellectual life. Its hope for new life and strength and survival depends on its clear vision and enthusiasm for the things of God and of His Kingdom.

4. The Outlook for the Future

The future for the Aglipayan Church does not seem to be bright or hopeful. It is being diagnosed by impartial observers and in their opinion it is in a moribund condition.¹ George Masa, who was at one time connected with the movement as secretary to Bishop Aglipay, thinks that when Aglipay is gone there will be a quarrel as to who will take his place, and the strength of the movement will be broken.²

In one of the letters received by the writer giving information concerning the church today, the following

statement appears which throws light on the subject under discussion:

"The Aglipay movement here in the Philippines is sure to meet a natural death because it has already outgrown its usefulness. It has already served its purpose -- the revolution in the Roman Church."¹

As to what the church's future will be, no person can exactly tell. But this one thing will have a great bearing upon its future: consecrated and thoroughly prepared Christian leaders whose hearts and minds are burning with the Spirit of God and noble purposes of the movement would be able to preserve the life and continue the history and work of the Filipino Independent Catholic Church. However, as has been pointed out, the church has no real leaders. It takes time and long-continued effort to train them. Thus the future of the church is indeed problematical.

Two groups of Protestants in the Philippines are debating the possibility of helping the Aglipayan church. The first believe that the sooner the church disappears the better for the Filipinos. The second group are of the opinion that the values in the church ought to be conserved, and that a new movement can be started. And by adapting the evangelical faith to its inner life and its standard of character and Christian living, the church body would be able to find new youth, a new growth, and progressive development. Unless this is done by these who love the church and want it to continue to exist, the younger members with their rising ethical standards, will repudiate the Aglipayan Church. This means its death, spiritually and physically

As long as it draws its spirit and power from the Source of all life, so long will the church live. As it denies the Spirit of God in Christ, it will die.

The Aglipayan Church must strive to interpret the spirit of Jesus as the New Testament interprets it. It must help its members to think through and to work for a successful solution of life's problems. It must help people to discover the will and purposes of God for the whole of life and the world.

The Filipino, Aglipayan or not, seems to have an intuitive grasp of spiritual verities and has the advantage of other oriental peoples because he has known Christianity for more than three hundred years. With his natural capacities and genius for religion and his Christian background he is in a unique place to make his contribution of abiding worth to the world of mankind, by way of leading many to the knowledge and understanding of Jesus and his principles of life.

5. The Church's Significance for Filipino National Life Tomorrow

A most significant thing in regard to the Aglipayan Movement is the fact that it originated in the Philippines, that it is a national religion of the one and a half million people who now compose its membership. The Filipinos, like other peoples, are proud of their achievements. They feel that they should preserve it for history and for their posterity. Such a national

church, if it can be reformed and rejuvenated, will be a unifying and strengthening factor in the religious, moral, political, social, and other phases of Filipino national life in the days to come. And such a reformation and a process of rejuvenation within the church is a possibility.

In spite of its present weaknesses due to a lack of sound, dynamic and practical Christian theology and ethical standards for its clergy and laity, and in spite of the fact that it has no consecrated well-trained, and highly competent leadership, yet there is hope for the Aglipayan Church. There are new influences from education, science, and Protestantism that are gradually and continually coming into the Aglipay movement. This fact ought to be a challenge and an opportunity for evangelical Christians and for Protestantism as a whole in helping to shape the future of the Aglipayan Church and the Filipino nation.

GTU Library



3 2400 00687 1838

LIBRARY USE ONLY

